MARCH 1981 NUMBER 37

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

$2.00

COSMIC ENCOUNTER

TROUBLES IN *VALETIA*
FREEDOM IN THE GALAXY VARIANT
HYBORIAN *RISK*
WEAPONS CONTEST WINNERS
PLAYING THE *ALIEN*
FANTASY GAMES UNLIMITED
AND 6 PAGES OF REVIEWS

WHAT IS THE MOST DANGEROUS BEAST IN YOUR ADVENTURE?

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- ☐ a frost-giant that has relocated to Miami
- ☐ a nazgul with diarrhea
- ☐ a one-legged giant with bunions
- ☐ Saruman's mother-in-law
- ☐ a pygmy with a backfiring blowgun
- ☐ a cross-eyed wizard with the evil eye
- ☐ I plead the fifth amendment; evil spirits may rise
- ☐ All equally dangerous
- ☐ None of the above

Answer: None of the above. It may be YOU or it may be someone you know. What do you look for? A gamer who is looking for some game but can't find it. A gamer who has read about a game but no one is stocking it. A gamer who is desperately trying to find some 20 sided dice.

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THE SPACE GAMER

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IN THIS ISSUE

Our cover article is a review of *Cosmic Encounter,* one of the most popular SF games ever released. Our thanks to Eon Products for their permission to reproduce art from this game.

There follows an article which should be of interest to anyone who has contemplated entering (or GMing) a commercial play-by-mail game. It will have a special interest for some hundreds of you . . .

For sadistic game masters, we have guidelines for playing the creature from *Alien.* Also, Bruce Webster concludes his two-part series on "The Ten Deadly Sins of Computer Game Writing." Our company report this issue is from Fantasy Games Unlimited, creators of *Chivalry & Sorcery.* For Conan fans, there is a *Risk* variant; for the hard-core boardgamers, there is a variant on *Freedom in the Galaxy.*

Towards the end is Nick Schuessler's eleventh and final game design article. Next month, Steve Jackson will take over the series.

Also, this month I have begrudged an extra column for letters. (It is a case of supply-side economics.)

–Forrest Johnson

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Where We're Going

Thanks to all of you who wrote in answer to the survey – there have been a lot of responses! – and especially to the readers who answered the question I asked a few months ago in this column. The question if you've forgotten, involved TSG's content: specifically, should there ever be articles about historical games printed by Steve Jackson Games? The answer was a pretty thorough NO. The great majority of you don't want anything but s-f and fantasy.

That's the way it'll be, then. It's the answer I expected – actually, it's the answer I was hoping for, because I don't like the idea of changing the TSG format any more than you do. If there'd been a *big* popular demand in the other direction, we would have gone along. But there wasn't. Just as well . . . That means that, if and when SJ Games does a purely historical title, you won't see any long articles on it. Maybe a capsule review, if somebody writes one. *The Space Gamer* will remain what it always has been: a magazine of science fiction and fantasy gaming. And it will continue to be as unbiased as we can make it . . . reserving the right to put in an occasional, unabashed commercial plug in this column. Such as the following:

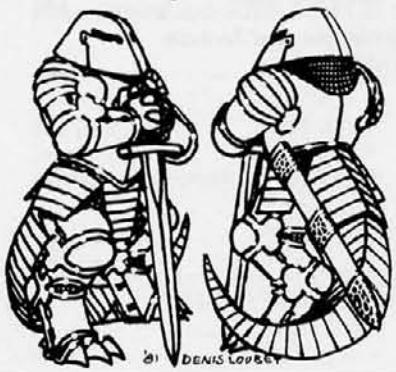
* * *

We've got five new titles coming up in the next couple of months – all purely s-f/fantasy, and all of them (in my own highly biased opinion) pretty good.

First: more *Cardboard Heroes.* We've been reading the mail, and (even as I write this) Denis Loubet is working on figures for three more sets to fill the common requests.

Set One, you remember, was Player Characters. Set Two is bad guys: *Goblins, Orcs, and Brigands.* The brigands are human nasties of various sorts; some would make good player-characters in their own right, others are just scum. (And a couple of the former are modeled after real people – the ones whose names we drew out of the slips returned to us by buyers.) After lengthy discussion, we decided that Goblins are small, sinister, and green . . . and that's how Denis is drawing them. Orcs, of course, are nasty. They're not pig-faced, though. Big, husky, fanged, and a little pointy-headed – really rough looking.

Set Three is more humanoid types: *Half-Orcs, Reptile Men, and Kobolds.* The half-orcs are a little bit smarter-looking than the full orcs, and differently costumed (you could also play them simply as a tribe of orcs). Kobolds are small, husky, and blue-skinned. Reptile men look like a cross between men and dragons – beautiful and dangerous. Illustrated are the front and back views of one of the first to be drawn – the reptile man in full plate armor. This is just the line-drawing – you should see the colored version.



Set Four is animals. We're planning 43 different beasties, from little apes and guard dogs all the way up to saber-tooth tigers. In between will be plenty of wolves, reptiles, giant insects, familiars, and other creatures.

These ought to be out by April. If work goes well, they'll be on the order blank in the next TSG.

* * *

Also coming up are two new games. Format on both will be similar to the ones we've already done – with one difference. Rather than print the rules on the same sheet as the map, we're going to put maps/charts/tables on one sheet AND include a rulebook – probably 24 pages. A number of you have commented that the single-sheet rules in *Kung Fu* and *Iran* have sometimes been hard to handle – so we'll try it a different way. It'll cost a little bit more, but (unless inflation catches up to me faster than I expect) the new games will still be $3.00.

The first new title is in mid-playtest right now. We know everything works; we're just getting it all fined down. The

Next Issue

Our April issue will feature "The Double-Timing, Double-Crossing, Pick-a-Past Paradox" (!); also:

The results of our 1980 Game Survey;

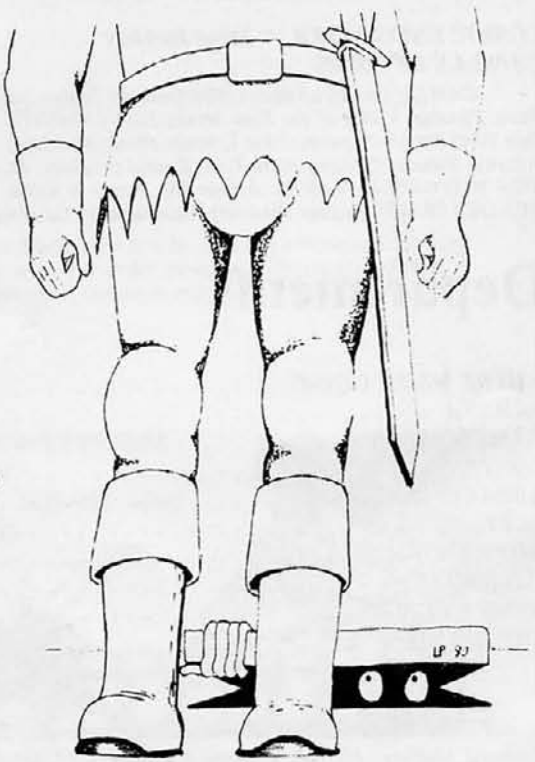
Conan's greatest battles, converted to scenarios for SPI's Prestags system;

The winners of the combination game contest;

An article on used ships for Traveller;

Steve Jackson's first article in the Game Design series;

And some substantial quantity of capsule reviews.



Errata

In issue 34 we listed Michael S. Matheny as the designer of *Marine: 2002,* but omitted Kerry Anderson, who was responsible for the original game concept.

name? CAR WARS.

That's right. Ever want to blow away the car that cut you off the freeway . . . drop a few spikes on the road in front of a tailgater . . . take on a cycle gang with the twin machineguns under your hood? That's what CAR WARS is about. Science fiction stories and James Bond movies have been playing with armed autos for years, but nobody ever published a game about them. Until now . . .

CAR WARS stems from an idea by Chad Irby, an Austin resident who is every bit as demented as anyone else around the TSG offices. He did the initial draft; I'm doing the rewrite. The final product will have both our names on it. In CAR WARS, players design freeway-combat vehicles, complete with weapons, armor, power plants, suspension, and even body style. Then they head for the road – to come home as aces, or crash and burn. Movement is on a grid system, with each 1-second turn divided into ten 1/10 second phases. Combat is simple and very deadly.

One nice thing about this one: it allows a successful character to build up experience and status, as well as wealth. 1 You can play it as a standard one-shot t one-or-two-player game . . . OR as a continuing campaign with several players, lots of driver (or gunner) characters, and a referee.

The other new one is my own project. It's not as far along, just because I've been getting CAR WARS ready for the playtesters . . . but it's getting there. This one doesn't have a name yet – but it was inspired by Bram Stoker's *Dracula.*

The title seems a natural – but after I'd worked on it for a while I understood why it hadn't been done. There are problems with the original *Dracula* story, as far as gaming goes. Some of them aren't ironed out yet – but it's just a matter of time.

Right now, the vampire player gets to move around on a map of London, trying to conceal his coffins and find new victims. His pursuers search for his hide-outs while trying to alert the city to the danger. When the players meet, they battle. Eventually, the "great Un-dead" dies (or is driven away) – or the vampire hunters bite the dust instead.

I doubt this one will have a solitaire version, unless I get inspired. Right now, it looks like it will work OK with two players; better with three (vampire, the hunters, and a referee). Or there can be more than one hunter-player. The game will draw from both role-playing and war-game concepts. I've got a couple of ideas that came too late to be included in *Fantasy Trip* . . . so I'll work them in here. Basically, this is going to be an FRP game that works itself out in one or two sessions, rather than continuing indefinitely. Eventually, somebody will win . . . and you can start another game later.

Both of these games will come out together . . . around a month to two months after the new Cardboard Heroes. Look for them sometime in May if all goes well. And if any of you see me looking slightly harried between now and then . . . that's probably why. But it's fun!

–Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

GAME MASTER also invites publishers to send errata or clarifications for their new games. They will be printed as space allows.

Dungeons & Dragons

In D&D, can the effects of potions, rods (etc.), spells, artifacts, or relics be made permanent by the 8th level magic-user spell "permanency"? The *Players Handbook* does not say yes or no.

–Richard Jamison

David Cook of TSR Games replies: "The effects of magic items may only be made permanent when the effects are the same as those of the spells listed under the description of 'permanency'."

Kursk (aka Prochorovska)

1. What happens to an Engineer unit caught on a bridge as it is being destroyed?
2. Are units allowed to advance on a DE, AE, or X combat result? How many hexes?
3. When units from two different corps attack, can artillery support come from one corps, both corps, or neither?

–Richard Heli

Stephen G. Wilcox replies on behalf of Task Force Games:

1. "A bridge cannot be destroyed until after the engineer unit has completed its construction, after which it must move off as per (4.252). No unit may destroy the bridge until the engineer has moved."

2. "If a DEFENDING unit is eliminated as a result of an AE or X, any surviving attacking units may advance one hex (see 5.45)."

3. "Artillery from both corps are allowed to support."

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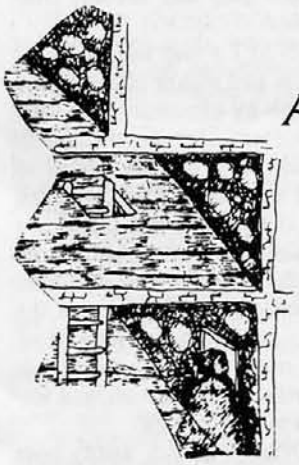

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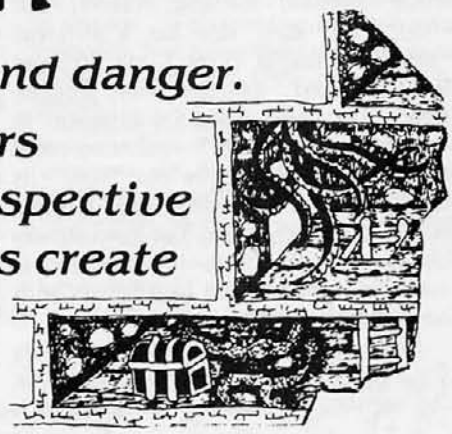

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Featured Review:

Cosmic Encounter

by Steve Jackson

I first saw COSMIC ENCOUNTER played at the World SF convention in Miami, back in 1977. It was hard to miss . . . every lobby of the hotel seemed to have at least one table full of people with these big hexagons spread out in front of them, pushing colored tokens back and forth and laughing like maniacs. Definitely, the game was a hit. Well, it's three years later . . . and they're still playing.

COSMIC ENCOUNTER is like no other game you've ever seen. It has elements of wargaming and boardgaming – even a dash of role-playing. It is simple enough for a party game – but it can be as cutthroat as *Diplomacy*.

There's no simulation whatsoever in COSMIC ENCOUNTER; the whole thing is totally stylized. Each player starts out with a stack of tokens ("bases") located on his own home hexagon ("home worlds"). The object of the game is to get bases on three enemy home-worlds – by force, negotiation, or what-have-you. Combat is settled by the play of cards; either player can ask for allies, which is where the diplomacy comes in.

The complexity comes into the game via the "alien powers." The basic set of COSMIC ENCOUNTER has 15 "alien power" cards – each representing a different alien race, with names like Laser, Virus, Macron, Amoeba, Trader, and Void. Each alien race has a different "power" – that is, it can break the rules in a different, specified way. For instance, the Laser makes its opponent in a challenge play "blind" – selecting a card at random. The Amoeba can "ooze" its bases across the void, rather than following normal movement rules. The Void attacks like any other player – but tokens it takes from its foes are lost forever with no hope of recovery. And so on . . .

Since the Basic Game has components for 2 to 4 players, and 15 different aliens, the number of possible combinations is obviously immense. Add to this the fact that a "shared win" is possible through negotiation, and the strategic possibilities become numberless. Again, like *Diplomacy*, this is a game where skill at the rules is only the beginning. To win, you must be able to play your opponents off against each other.

All in all, I consider CE to be a real winner, for three important reasons. First, it's a highly interactive game, with lots of variety – but it's easy to learn. Second, it's quick; you can play three or four games in an evening without getting tired. And third, it's a great value. You get a box, with *lots* of components – *attractive, glossy, useful* components – for only $12.00. How many times have I paid more than that for a "big company" game that looked shoddy by comparison, and played out quickly?

Strategy

I don't want to take up a lot of space talking about strategy. The game itself includes a good explanation of basic strategy – and you'll have to play a few games to get the feel of it anyhow. I will mention my own favorite winning method. Call it the "Thunderbolt." It consists of conservative play throughout the beginning and midgame, while hoarding one or two good edict cards and the best attack card I can get hold of. I build up to four bases – one short of the number needed to win. Of course, in order to be inoffensive, I will have permitted other players to build up to four also. At this unstable point in the game, I turn loose the thunderbolt – an all-or-nothing gamble to get that one last base. It usually works. Needless to say, I have to keep an eye on other players who might be (consciously or otherwise) working toward the same thing.

One general bit of advice: watch ALL your opponents ALL the time . . .

Expansion Sets

The only real problem with the basic COSMIC ENCOUNTER set is that only four can play. Eon solved this problem neatly (and profitably) with its first two "expansion sets." Each of these expansion sets provides ten new alien powers, and a planet hex and tokens for one more player. Thus, when you get them both, you have a total of 35 aliens, and a set that accommodates up to 6. Since the central hexagon in the game has only 6 sides, six is the maximum number of players that can (theoretically) play a "normal" game of CE.

Most of the new powers in these two sets are just as good as any of the originals. A few are "far out" enough that the cards bear warnings not to use them in a two-player game or (in a few cases) against certain specified opponents. This is not a serious problem, though.

As it turned out, the first two expansion sets were just the beginning. EXPANSION SET 3 added 15 *more* aliens, as well as nine new playing cards. Three of the new cards are new "edicts" – these being special event cards which affect play in unusual manners. Again, a few of the new aliens are limited in permissible use – but again, not a severe problem.

EXPANSION SET 4 is a deck of cards – the "Flare Cards." One flare card is presented for each of the fifty aliens in the foregoing sets. The "flare" rules allow players to augment their existing powers or borrow other players' powers. Flare play can get pretty wild. Like the "multi-power" game possible with the basic set (each player draws two, three, or even more alien-power cards, and uses them ALL), flare play can become frustratingly complex.

EXPANSION SET 4 also adds rules for adding a seventh and eighth player to the game. It does this by presenting two sorts of aliens who don's play on the board. One is the Zilch, who has the power to kibitz, look at everyone's hand, and tell what he sees. If the winner is the player the Zilch predicted (secretly) before the game began, the Zilch shares his win. Fun! The other off-board power is the Shark, who can cut in on anyone's hand. I don't think much of this power – it turns the game into a free-for-all, and victory becomes a matter of luck.

With EXPANSION SET 5, sanity goes

right out the window. The name of the set is "100 Moons." Each of these "moons" is a playing piece to be added to the board. When a moon is revealed, its reverse side will give instructions to all the players or some of the players – ranging from the relatively reasonable ("Null – While occupying this moon, you lose your alien powers") to the totally silly ("Tongues – While this moon is occupied, each player must speak in rhymes whenever talking, or lose a token to the warp for each prose utterance). Play with moons tends to be absolutely unpredictable. If you're in a moon game, don't try to make any long-range plans; just go with the flow.

Recommendations

As ought to be obvious by now, I like COSMIC ENCOUNTER. It's totally original, and a lot of fun. I recommend it without reservation to gamers, with the following exceptions:

(1) Don't buy CE if you have no opponents. It's worthless as a solitaire game, and (in my own opinion) very little fun as a two-player contest. The more, the merrier.

(2) Don't buy CE if you are heavily into "simulation," or if you don't like games where diplomacy is more important than tactics. CE is a conceptual game, simulating nothing except the very *essence* of negotiation and power politics.

As to the expansion sets: If you like the basic game, you'll like the first three expansions. Play them for a while before getting expansions 4 or 5. If you find that you prefer a relatively "pure" game, you don't need the expansions. However, if you find yourself playing lots of six-player games, trading powers in the middle of the games, and/or playing while in altered mental states . . . by all means get the flares and moons.

COSMIC ENCOUNTER (Eon Products); $12.00. Designed by Bill Eberle, Ned Horn, Peter Olotka, and Jack Kittredge. Boxed, with five large play hexagons, 4 sets of 20 colored tokens and 4 large star discs, 54 cards, 15 alien power cards, one heavy board "hyper-space cone," and 8-page 8½" x 11" rulebook. 2 to 4 players; playing time about 45 minutes. Published 1977.

CE EXPANSION SET 1: $4.00. Ten new alien cards; one large hexagon and one set of colored tokens for a 5th player.

CE EXPANSION SET 2: $4.00. Similar to Set 1.

CE EXPANSION SET 3: $4.00. Fifteen new aliens; nine extra cards.

CE EXPANSION SET 4: $4.00. 50 "Flare" cards and three blanks, plus instructions.

CE EXPANSION SET 5: $4.00. 100 perforated "moon" chits, plus instructions.

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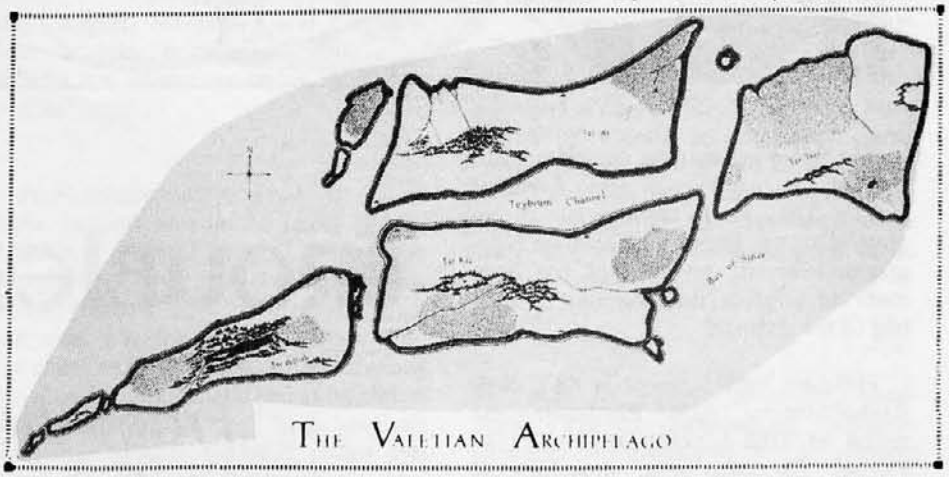

The Valetian Archipelago

...with a hissing shriek a second Rask leaped from the outcropping, swinging a short battleaxe. Telegar snapped his shield up to catch the blow but the force knocked him flat on his back a second time. As his shoulders hit he pushed up and over his head with the shield, flinging the Rask away before it could free it's axe for another try. Scrambling to his feet, Telegar faced the Rask who'd already recovered its footing. It brandished its axe warily. Telegar advanced a step and feinted with his sabre tip.

...as he pierced the Rask through, the axe missed his helm and smashed into the Dwarf's shoulder. The mail shirt withstood the edge, but the shoulder was broken.

Before Telegar could roll the Rask over to recover his sabre, the first Rask had recovered its breath and its feet...

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Lords of Valetia is an adult game open to anyone 18 years of age or older living within the continental U.S. Residents of Alaska, Hawaii, Canada, or having APO/FPO addresses will only be accepted on provision that the customer realize there may be excessive postal delays to those areas at times. All funds must be paid in U.S. currency.

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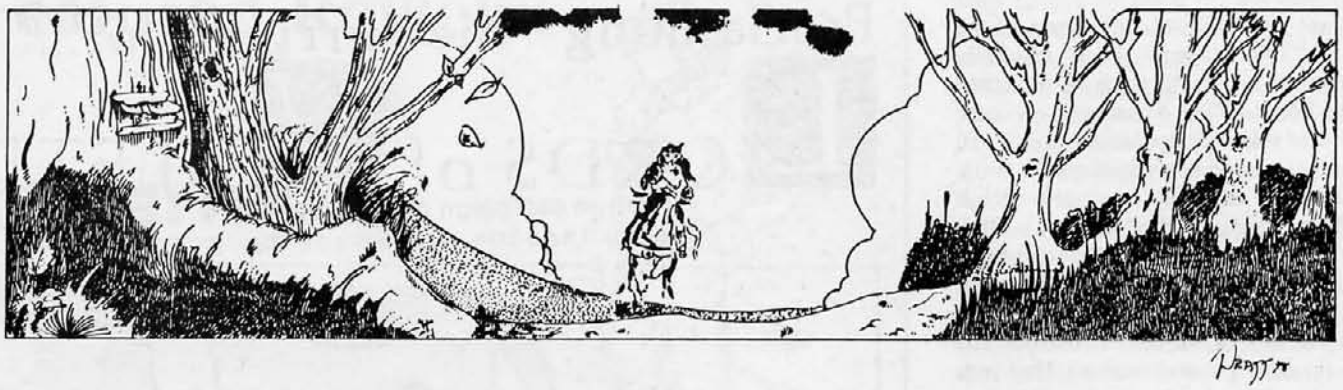


Troubles in Valetia

From the Correspondence of Aubrey Elvensage

The following extracts comprise a history of the play-by-mail game *Lords of Valetia.* They are in approximate chronological order. Except for obvious typographical errors, no attempt has been made to improve the grammar or spelling of the originals.

Full-page advertisement in S&T, September/October, 1976: Proclaiming the arrival of THE LORDS OF VALETIA; Fantasy Campaign with thousands of players; System of promotion with $400.00 in prizes; Simultaneous movement by correspondence. Imagine a portal which could transport you from this world to a fantastic land of unparalleled beauty and adventure. . . . We publish the quarterly magazine *Valiance*. . . .
Ans Varkus Enterprises

Letter to "the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Noble Order of Peregrinators," April 19, 1977: . . . I wish to acknowledge my responsibility for the design and delay of *Lords of Valetia* also. After failing to maintain the strict schedule for the game and with severe financial difficulties, I relinquished title of my venture to James Ronco and his company . . .
Andrew Baird

Letter to "prospective" pereginators, Summer, 1980: . . . we at Design Operations were contacted and asked if we were interested in the rights to *Lords of Valetia.* Believing in the potential of this game, we agreed to fulfill their promises in the S&T ad in exchange for sole ownership. . . .
James Ronco

Lords of Valetia rulebook, copyright 1977 by R,B&B Design Operations: Dedicated to the Patient Ones.

Heritage sheet, Elf: . . . go and attain the fifth level of your Re'arth to prove yourself before the voice of time. Returneth then, and you shall be be told of your heritage . . .

Heritage sheet, Sage: . . . attain the fourth level in the Ring by courage and wisdom alone. If you can accomplish such a feat, then and only then, will it be shown that you are one strong enough to control the powers. . . .

Game question replies by Design Operations: . . . not known . . . not known . . . not known . . . not known . . .

Proclamation, November, 1977: Valience, the official newsletter of *Lords of Valetia,* is at the printer's office at this time and each of you should receive your copy in two or three weeks. We are sorry for the delay . . .

Proclamation, December, 1977: Tired of having your friends complain about the way your Peregrinator operates? Do they constantly second-guess your actions? Well, convince them to have their own character in *Lords of Valetia,* and receive two free moves from R.B&B Design Operations INC.

Letter, Spring, 1978: It is with deepest regret that I announce to you that we have transferred rights and responsibilities to *Lords of Valetia* to Gamemasters Publishers Association. We feel that this company can do a better job of running the game, and that the players deserve better service than we have been giving them.

At the root of the problem is that we plunged into the Augean task of completing *Lords of Valetia* (we inherited only a framework) without realizing exactly what we were getting into. At the time, all of us were university students, and as such also had responsibilities to our studies. coupled with all this was our need to work at other jobs in the side, and things turned into a mess.

By now we have gotten our act together; yet I'm sure that most of you are thoroughly tired by the continual delays. Therefore, we accepted G.P.A.'s offer to take over the game, and almost certainly eliminate the delays once and for all. . . .
(unsigned)

Review, TSG 15: This fantasy role playing game was designed by Andrew Baird for his company Ans Varkus. Flyers and a couple of ads in S&T appeared about a year and a half ago, but just as the game was getting underway, Ans Varkus had some sort of financial crisis and went under. The game was picked up by Designs Operations, Inc. and after six months, seems to have settled down and started running smoothly. . . . In all, the game shows thought and imagination. . . .
Brian Esterson

Letter, TSG 17: Some years ago, I answered an ad in SPI's *Strategy & Tactics* describing a fantasy role playing game called THE LORDS OF VALETIA produced by Ans Varkus. I never heard a word from Ans Varkus or ever saw anything from my $19.50. About a year later, I did receive a letter from Design Operations, Inc. stating that they had acquired L.O.V. and would be sending me my rules package soon. I never heard any more from them and there had been no return address on the envelope or letter head. . . . Any new and bright group of people trying to get started in the gaming business today will find the road even harder than before because of situations like LORDS OF VALETIA. . . .

Duke Whedbee

Letters, TSG 18: I read with interest Duke Whedbee's letter about LOV in TSG 17 and have to admit that is at least partially right. . . .

Brian Esterson

. . . After Ans Varkus folded, RB&B Design Operations followed a very tough road, and there were many delays and forgotten players, of which I was one. Early in 1978 I wrote to them to find out if they wished to transfer the game to GPA and I enclosed a check with my opening figure. To my surprise and later suspicion my offer was accepted without any discussion or price-haggling. An immediate notice was mailed by RB&B so that I was receiving players' orders before I had any of the game materials, which trickled in shortly thereafter. What I received was incomplete and there were no instructions on running the game itself. . . . Ans was so anxious to get his game running that he advertised it when it was only half developed-material wise, and the adjudication system was all in his head. Due to this, and the large response, he turned it over to some friends (RB&B) who were then college students and not really able to spare the amount of time needed. The creative role was left to the creator, and true to form, he procrastinated on every project, producing little. In all of that time (two years this summer) only one small example of combat had ever been committed to paper. When this was turned over to me, I effectively got 400 players and a few odd materials, and am now forced to design a game virtually from scratch. . . .

W. Elmer Hinton, Jr.

Proclamation, April, 1978: The transfer of LoV included all rights and materials for the game, but no money was transferred from the LoV account. . . . I need about 200 of you to renew your order for there to be sufficient funds for the production of VALIANCE. . . . GPA is continuing the offer of 2 free turns for your character per new player or character entered, up to twelve. . . . RB&B screwed a lot of you. Your files are a mess, so in order to get things back in order, the following information must be sent in. . . . *Valiance* is being planned for May, August, November, and February. Just for your information, RB&B lied months ago when they said it was at the printer. . . .

Proclamation, July, 1978: . . . As Steve Jackson says in the latest SPACE GAMER "When it began to look as though we'd have to make a choice between 'polished' and 'on time' the deadline went out the window." Since I do not claim to be the equal of Metagaming certainly I should be allowed as much leeway in this regard. . . . huge response from the SPACE GAMER review has completely depleted Rulebook supplies. . . . The decision to stop the game, rather than waste your money on half-baked turns is a wise one I believe. The total delay should not exceed two or three months. . . . enough of you subscribed so that, financially, the game is solvent. . . .

Proclamation, March 10, 1979: It has been a long time that you have been without a word. . . . I have, for the last three months, been looking for Investors. . . . The redesign is nearly complete, but without your help it will never see the light of day. What I ask may be hard for you to do, but after trusting me once. . . . If the players choose to invest and I collect at least $15,000 then the game will be run partly by computer, in the new redesigned way, there will be new Papers of Heritage, and a Rulebook, and *Valiance* will be professionalized. If I don't get the needed amount: The game will restart immediately, run under the old system . . .

Valiance no. 1 and Kaissa no. 42, August/October 1979: This issue contains 5 magazines, PROCLAMATION, GPA JOURNAL, TWILIGHT ZONE 7, KAISSA 42, AND VALIANCE 1. . . . At last! Kaissa/Valiance. You haven't been waiting too long, but what do you expect of a quarterly anyway? . . . December will see the return of regular adjudications for LORDS OF VALETIA! . . . I will shortly be returning all those investments collected, as I said would be the case if you failed me. You did. . . .

Full-page advertisement in The Dragon, July, 1980: Proclaiming the arrival of THE LORDS OF VALETIA; Fantasy campaign with thousands of players; Unique system of promotion; Simultaneous movement by correspondence. Imagine a portal which could transport you to a fantastic land of unparalleled beauty and adventure . . . We publish the quarterly magazine *Valiance.* . . .

Gamemasters Publishers Association

News & Plugs, TSG 29: The pbm game *Lords of Valetia* is once again being advertised. Gamers should be aware that this game has been plagued with difficulties in the past, and that many people have sent money and gotten few or no turns.

Lords of Valetia Rulebook, copyright 1979 by Gamemasters Publishers Association: Dedicated to the Patient Ones.

Valiance no.2 (dated 5/27/80): Valiance will now be solely dedicated to LOV players. . . . the new computer system means that I may handle 800-1,000 players if I use about 6 minutes a turn. . . . Mediocrity-never again! . . . The Campaign has been completely redesigned, and where before there existed a couple of maps and a few dozen pages of background, there now exist hundreds of maps and pages of background. . . . about the schedule of *Valiance*; this magazine will appear irregularly, though I hope it will be quarterly, but this depends on the financial health we gain. . . . Since October, when *Valiance* no. 1 appeared, you have doubtless been wondering about the schedule given then. At the time I thought computerization was but a dream, and has planned to restart about the first of the year under the old system but then an odd thing happened. I was forced to work overtime and put in about 65-75 hours a week throughout October and November. This means that by the first week of December I had saved a great deal more money than planned. . . . So, I went out and got a loan, and the computer. . . . the money couldn't be stretched so in February I decided to seek out investors once more – not as investors, strictly, but as partners. . . . One couple responded and provided just enough money to see us through July. . . .

Elmer

Letter to Steve Jackson, Aug. 16, 1980: . . . I not only noticed a rather snide remark in TSG concerning us, but I have good reason to believe that said remark cost us about 20% of our expected response from the DRAGON. . . . It occurs to me that you will no doubt mention Valetia's past "troubles". . . .

W. Elmer Hinton, Jr.

Letter to Steve Jackson, Aug 26, 1980: . . . Borrowing from the original LOV concept of modular descriptions, the new LOV uses a computer to store and mix proper configurations of place or event descriptions and prints them out. . . . The speed of the system, and its capacity to store information also results in greater accuracy of adjudication and elimination of inconsistent rulings. . . . Basically, orders are fulfilled the day received, though after registration the assignment of background papers can take 3-6 weeks, and occasionally 8 weeks depending on our volume. . . . The background papers, maps, etc., are roughly 12-30 pages long and completely define your character. Up to 12 pages may have been individually written by the GM for your character. . . . all of these necessary systems have been worked out, and can function efficiently. . . .

Elmer

Letter to Elmer Hinton, Sept. 8, 1980: . . . If you can do what you say you are going to do, it will be a hell of an about-face. . . .

Forrest Johnson

Letter to Forrest Johnson, Sept. 27, 1980: Go ahead and have reservations. It will be punishment enough to know that when you see the new turns you will sorely chastise yourself for having doubted. I won't try to convince you, you'll just have to see it. . . .

Elmer

Survey, TSG 33: Gamemasters Publishers Association is the current owner of *Lords of Valetia*, a game which has not produced a turn in over two years. GPA has been advertising heavily, and promises to start producing turns for a revised and expanded version of LOV before too long. . . .

Valiance no. 3 (received 11/22/80): . . . we have so far made one error, and only one error – but it's a beaut! We blew it but good. You've probably been waiting for it, so it is about time to explain.

While I was getting all these volunteers for Partners and for programming and so forth, I never once could find a non-player to help me (or even a player close by) who could be of help in writing, and just physically typing the material. As it happens, I use the one-two finger system, as developed by F.I. Hunt, and T.I. Peck. I run about 12 words a minute, no more.

This means that originally, what with *Valiance* and the new Disks, I sorely underestimated the time needed to process all the old players and the new ones too. . . .

I've been asked to define our policy concerning old players. . . . As far as we can tell, the over 400 players we started with, plus the 150 players who paid and were never registered, times the old turn fee, equals about $11,000 collected by Ans Varkus and RB&B. GPA couldn't be expected to make up a credit like that!

As a result we are giving back past credit – but not just for free. A renewal is mandatory. This is perfectly legal, ethical, and proper. . . .

Advertisement, TSG 35: Proclaiming the arrival of LORDS OF VALETIA . . .

Letter to Elmer Hinton, Dec. 14, 1980: I still have not received my first turn in the "new" Valetia. . . .

Forrest Johnson

Letter to Forrest Johnson, Dec. 19, 1980: You haven't received your first turn because, first, you need your PAPERS OF HERITAGE, and then a pre-turn for questions and familiarization first, like everyone else, and I know you haven't received your Papers yet.

In any case the main reason is financial. . . .

It seems that one of my potential investors, one [*name deleted –FJ*], who shall remain nameless, has just decided that he will not invest after all. . . .

When I made the trends and projections for December, back in May, I did so assuming we started with $3,000, and would be about even by now. At worst, I projected a $200 negative figure to be made up by a short term loan. At present, I'm $800 in debt, of which $500 I need within two weeks. . . .

In any case, the 4th edition Rulebook can't be printed until I pay off the printer ($200) what I owe on *Valiance* no.3; I have to pay Radio Shack $200 to get the new Disk Drive or I lose the $200 already put down on layaway; and my loan company has said that if I don't get them their $150 very shortly there will be action. What can I say. We can't run off and mail the Papers of Heritage until I can pay to do so. . . .

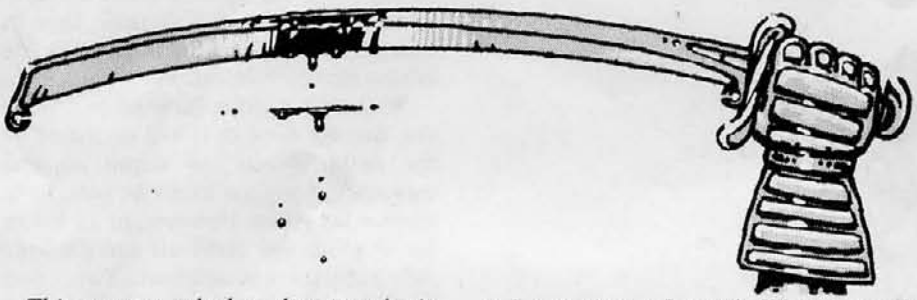
That doesn't mean that things don't move. I am completing Papers assignments as fast as possible, and I accepted a Honeywell programmer to do one of the large programs I need while I do this. The new Rulebook and *Valiance* are proceeding if slowly . . . I expect to get roughly even by mid February, and on a good keel by April . . .

Elmer

TSG endeavors to express no opinion concerning the material reproduced above. The reader is invited to form his own conclusions.

In fairness, we must point out that Valetia is in no way unique in its problems. Many PBM efforts have experienced similar difficulties getting off the ground. Some eventually succeed; some vanish. Valetia's main distinction, in fact, is that after four years they haven't given up! *–FJ/SJ*

WEAPONS CONTEST WINNERS



This contest asked readers to submit original ideas for s-f weaponry. we got a lot . . .

First prize (and a 12-issue subscription) goes to Christopher Beiting. He sent no less than five weapon ideas, three of which seemed very good:

MONOWIRE BLADE: This is an inexpensive alternative to Niven's variable-sword. It requires a lower technology to build and maintain. A superfine wire is stretched between the (reinforced) point and hilt of a scimitar-like sword. The user slashes at the target with the wire edge. The wire cuts into the target at the molecular level, acting as a wedge for the blade, which widens the cut. If the supporting blade is bent out far enough, the weapon will look more like a sickle, and can be used to cut very hard targets by turning the sickle-part entirely out of the cutting path.

SCRAMBLER: A small (hand-held) ultrasound weapon. Its beam is short (only about 6 cm) but very damaging to organic matter. Easy to conceal (a well-made one can actually be hidden in the hand, and even the cheap models are small), it is a favorite device of thieves and assassins. Placed against the brain and triggered, it kills; used against the spinal cord, it may kill or only paralyze. It can also destroy small locks, erase magnetic tapes, etc. However, the battery will only be good for 3 to 5 shots.

SKULLCRACK: A 2- to 3-ounce weight is connected by a flexible, conducting cord to a finger ring. The weight may contain a capacitor, or the ring may be (or be connected to) a battery. Flipped at a person's head, it combines concussive force and an electrical jolt to cause unconsciousness or death. Mainly good for surprise attacks or torturing innocent victims . . .

Second place (6 issues) goes to Craig Sheeley, for a rather nasty gadget:

PHONIC SHURIKEN: A combination of the "phonic stiletto" (Alan Dean Foster's *The End of the Matter*) and the Oriental throwing star. The central disk is a 3 cm piece of metal. When properly activated and thrown, it sprouts six 6 cm "blades" of coherent sound, capable of cutting through most materials. Due to the small power source, the blades only last for about a second, but this is usually time to strike and do damage. For additional lethality, some models can spray a toxin or virus along the blade-axis, in order to infect any wound created by the shuriken.

First runner-up is Steve Condit, with a *defensive* weapon:

The GANDHI SHIELD was developed by a peace-loving but highly technological splinter culture. Its method of operation is unknown. Physically, it consists of a flesh-colored disk 5 to 7 cm in diameter (usually grafted to the palm or forehead of the user) and a tiny electronic bio-amplifier, which is implanted in the brain or the muscles under the disk. The disk is almost unnoticeable until it is actually used, but in use it glows silver.

Though the theory behind the Shield is unknown, its effects are not. It appears to reflect ill will back on the user, creating hallucinations, abject terror, or unconsciousness. This is not an automatic process; it requires attention and practice on the part of the user. A Shield is of no use against a surprise attack. One skilled user can hold off five or six foes. Two users co-operating can handle more than twice as many. Effectiveness of the Shield increases at least geometrically with the number of users.

Important limitations of the Shield are few. First, it is useless as an offensive weapon; an attempt to attack with it will fail and may damage the user. Second, it is useless against other than humanoid attackers. It has no effect on animals or non-human aliens.

Second runner-up was David Green. His weapon was a bit harder to believe, but much more original, than many of the entries:

ANTI-RESPIRATORY FIELD PROJECTOR: A hand-held weapon with a range of 30 feet and a maximum duration of 2.5 minutes. It projects a field which cannot be entered by particles with an atomic weight equal to or less than that of oxygen. Thus, beings it affects will find themselves breathless, and may lose consciousness. (Editorial suggestion: What about a larger, vehicle-mounted version . . . ?)

Contest

This month's contest: create a non-human race. This may be an intelligent creature suitable for a fantasy mythos, or an alien from deep space . . . use your imagination. Your creation should fit within its mythos – whether that is fantasy, s-f, or something else. Colorful details, interesting powers and limitations, likes and dislikes, and/or suggestions for gaming use . . . all these will help.

All entries become the property of TSG. First-place winner will receive a 12-issue subscription; second place gets 6 issues. Space allowing, we may also print one or more runners-up. We reserve the right to award no prizes if no entries of publishable quality are received. Entries must be postmarked no later than March 31, 1981.

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ALIEN

by Andrew Elovich and Forrest Johnson

Movie fans will have a hard time forgetting the creature that had the title role in *Alien*. In the movie (and the book), the crew of the ship *Nostromo* found the Alien in a derelict ship in an unlisted system near Zeta II Reticuli. They brought it on board their ship where it proceeded to kill all but one of them. This article offers rules for using the Alien as a monster in TFT, D&D, and *Traveller*.

Care and Feeding

An adult Alien stands about 3 meters tall. Its black, slimy form includes four limbs, a tail (used for climbing) and an elongated head with lots of sharp teeth.

An adult Alien may be regarded as very intelligent. It exhibits considerable curiosity, craftiness, and an ability to learn from experience. However, it will never use any kind of tools or artifacts. It is immune to poison, Sleep, Charm, and all cold-based attacks. It cannot disbelieve illusions. It is vulnerable to fire, taking +1 damage from any heat-based attack.

The blood of an Alien is highly acidic. Any metal weapon which damages it will become corroded and useless in one minute. An Alien will regenerate damage (even fire damage) at the rate of one point a minute. However, it will not regenerate if it is killed.

Aliens are very rare. They have no treasure, except what their victims may have possessed. Since they often drag their victims back to their lairs, some quantity of treasure will accumulate there.

An Alien may be found almost anywhere, but it will tend to establish its lair in a deep cavern, or an obscure chamber in a ruin. In the lair, one may find a number of leathery cocoons, a meter or so in height. They might be taken for urns or vases.

Inside each cocoon is a large, hand-shaped creature with a retractable tube emerging from the "palm" and a tail coiled beneath it. If a creature of living flesh touches it, the cocoon will become transparent and the hand-shaped Alien may be observed moving within. If there is still a living, breathing creature of appropriate size within 3 meters, a minute later the cocoon will open and the hand-shaped Alien will spring out.

The Alien will try to attach itself to the victim's face. It will penetrate a visor (if any) in about 30 seconds. It will wrap its tail around the victim's neck, force its tube down his (or her) throat, and try to subdue him by suffocation.

While the Alien is fastened to the victim, damage done to it will be shared by the victim. When the victim becomes comatose, it will no longer be possible to remove the Alien. However, in 12 hours, the creature will crawl off and die without further encouragement. Two hours later, the victim will wake up. He will be ambulatory, but confused, helpless and very hungry. Within an hour, a pre-adult Alien will emerge from his chest, probably killing him in the process.

The pre-adult Alien is only about the size of a large lizard, but it will grow to full size in about 24 hours, if food is available. (An Alien can eat anything a human can, including other humans.) The Alien will attack almost any creature it encounters. However, it will avoid big parties and creatures twice its size or larger. It will also avoid creatures which look unappetizing – undead, slimes and molds, demons, elementals, and siliceous or ethereal creatures.

The Alien may postpone an attack to gain surprise, if possible. It will attempt to pin its victim and then attack with its jaws. But if it is in a hurry, it will use its claws. It cannot make both attacks at once.

If the Alien is hungry (50% chance), it will consume its victim on the spot. Otherwise, it will drag him back to its lair, not caring whether he is dead or only unconscious. The Alien will lay an egg in the victim. In about 24 hours, the egg will grow into a larva, consume the body and form a cocoon. Then, it will wait for someone else to come along . . .

TFT

A cocoon stops 3 hits. The skin of the hand-shaped creature within stops an additional 2 hits. It may be considered ST = 4, DX = 13, IQ = 1, MA = 6.

The spring from the cocoon is automatically successful, unless the victim makes a 5-die roll vs. adjDX. If he succeeds, the Alien cannot spring again. It is basically harmless, and can be killed at leisure. (It will die in a few hours, anyway.)

If he misses his roll, the Alien is on his face, and he will suffer 4 points of exhaustion a turn until his ST is reduced to 1. During this time, he may attempt to remove the Alien once a turn, rolling 5

dice vs. ST. Someone else may try, but only one person per turn. If the Alien is removed, some of the victim's flesh will go with it. He will take 1+1 damage. If the Alien is killed or removed before he becomes unconscious, and he survives the process, he will suffer no further effects.

If the victim becomes comatose, and is not killed, the pre-adult Alien will grow within him. It may be considered ST = 10, DX = 15, IQ = 8, MA = 12. Skin stops 4 hits; bite does 1+2, claws 1-1. It will do 4 dice damage when it emerges. It will immediately become competent to fend for itself (no teaching it to walk, no toilet training), and will seek food and a lair of its own.

A fully grown Alien is ST = 40, DX = 15, IQ = 13, MA = 15. Skin stops 6 hits; bite does 3 dice, claws 2. It may be considered to have the following talents: climbing, alertness, acute hearing, tracking, silent movement, tactics, and spying. It may be considered a 1-hex creature for movement purposes, 3-hex for combat.

D&D

Some elaborations and modifications are necessary for this game:

Cocoon
Frequency: Very Rare
Number Appearing: 10-200
AC: 5
Move: 0
Hit Dice: 0
In Lair: 100%
Treasure: A
No. of Attacks: 0
Damage/Attack: 0
Special Attack: See Below
Special Defense: None
Magic Resistance: Standard
Intelligence: Non-
Alignment: Patient
Size: S
Psionic Ability: None

Assuming you hit a cocoon, it is necessary to make a second roll against the creature inside:

Hand-shaped Alien
Frequency: Very Rare
Number Appearing: 1
AC: 7
Move: 8"
Hit Dice: 1+2
In Lair: 100%
Treasure: None
No. of Attacks: 1
Damage/Attack: Special
Special Attack: Suffocation
Special Defense: Acid Blood, Regeneration
Magic Resistance: Standard
Intelligence: Non-
Alignment: Aggressive
Size: S
Psionic Ability: None

To dodge the Alien, the victim must save vs. breath weapons with a penalty of 2. He may attempt to remove the Alien once a round by making the same save. (Someone else may roll instead, as per TFT.) Also, he must save vs. poison once a round or become comatose. If the Alien is removed physically, it will do 2 dice damage to the victim. The Alien may also be affected by Remove Curse, but it should be allowed a saving roll. Once the victim is comatose, the Alien within may be destroyed only by a Cure Disease cast by a cleric of patriarch rank or higher. Otherwise you get a:

Pre-adult Alien
Frequency: Very Rare
Number Appearing: 1
AC: 3
Move: 15"
Hit Dice: 3
In Lair: 50%
Treasure: None
No. of Attacks: 1
Damage/Attack: 1d8 (bite) or 1d4 (claw)
Special Attack: Surprises on 1-2
Special Defenses: Acid Blood, Regeneration
Magic Resistance: Standard
Intelligence: Average
Alignment: Hungry
Size: M
Psionic Ability: None

The pre-adult Alien will do 6 dice damage emerging, and will eat what's left if undisturbed. Soon, you will have to deal with an:

Adult Alien
Frequency: Very Rare
Number Appearing: 1
AC: 0
Move: 18"
Hit Dice: 10
In Lair: 15%
Treasure: A
No. of Attacks: 1
Damage/Attack: 4d6 (bite) or 2d8 (claw)
Special Attacks: Surprises on 1-3, Overbearing (*DM's Guide*, p. 73)
Special Defenses: Acid Blood, Regeneration
Magic Resistance: Standard
Intelligence: Very
Alignment: Hungry
Size: L
Psionic Ability: None

Traveller

Briskly juggling apples and oranges, we offer these descriptions:

Cocoon
Trapper (?)
Weight: 8 kg
Hits: None
Armor: Cloth
Weapons: See Below
A0F0S0

If you hit the cocoon, it is necessary to make a second roll to hit the creature inside:

Hand-shaped Alien
Pouncer (?)
Weight: 3 kg
Hits: 6/2
Armor: Jack
Weapons: See Below
A0F0S1

To dodge the hand-shaped Alien, the victim must roll his dexterity or less on three dice. If the Alien succeeds in attaching itself to his face, he will lose two points of endurance per combat round. When his endurance is reduced to zero, he is comatose. A roll of three dice versus strength removes the Alien, and also does 2 dice damage to the victim. The Alien within may be removed by a surgeon (Book 1, p. 20) on a roll of 2 dice vs. his dexterity. A bad roll kills the victim. Low Passage will arrest the growth of the Alien within. If nothing interferes, the pre-adult Alien will do 6 dice of wounds when it emerges.

Pre-adult Alien – Adult Alien
Hunter
Weight: 7 kg – 100 kg
Hits: 10/5 – 35/15
Armor: Battle
Weapons: Teeth (2d6-1 – 4d6)
Claws (1d6-1 – 2d6+2)
A7F5S2 – A4F8S2

For combat purposes, presume the Alien has Tactics 2 and Zero-Gee Combat 2. It has a skill level of 5 with its teeth, 3 with its claws. To strike with its teeth, it must first make a successful (zero damage) attack with its claws. An individual so struck is pinned and helpless until he makes a roll of 3 dice vs. his strength. He may try once per combat round. (In practice, if he misses his first attempt, he can probably forget all the rest.)

Note: These rules are based largely on the movie, with some details from the book. The two versions are not completely compatible.

An alternate set of rules for ***Traveller*** *may be found in* ***The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society****, issue 4.*

Deus Ex Machina

THOU SHALT NOT . . .

(Part II)

by Bruce Webster

Last month I listed the first 5 of the "ten deadly sins of writing computer games." For those of you who missed it, they were:

- to code before you think
- to assume the user has all the knowledge that you have
- not to write proper documentation
- to ignore the strengths (and weaknesses) of the computer, and
- to overestimate the worth of your program.

I also acknowledged my debt to P.J. Brown and his fine book, *Writing Interactive Compilers and Interpreters*, from whence came several of these problems. Here, then, are the remaining five sins.

Prevent a Game from Being Saved or Cleanly Exited

The first part of this sin – failing to allow the user to interrupt a game in progress and save it so that it can be resumed later – seems to be fairly infrequent, but it deserves mention anyway. It can be rather distressing to be in the middle of a game, having made terrific progress due to your great skills, and then have some interruption (company arriving, class starting, house burning down) force you to quit and start all over again later. This is especially true for games with probabilistic outcomes (since you *know* that you'll never be able to kill that balrog with one blow again) and for multiplayer games (since your opponent has now seen your strategy and can anticipate it next game).

This was more forgivable for cassette-loaded programs, but disk-based programs do not have much of an excuse. The only solution here is to plan on making this a feature from the very start and design the game (and resulting program) accordingly.

The second part of this sin – to give the player no clean way of exiting from a program – is inexcusable, and yet I have encountered it in some "classy" games. It takes two forms. The first is where the game simply has no "exit" command, and the user must use some system command (control-c, RESET, or whatever) to end the game. The second is where the system dies when the player is done. This is most common in disk-based games that have their own modified operating systems and that crash the system when the game is done (or force the user to do), usually in an effort to protect source code. While the motivation is understandable, the technique stinks.

The solution is a simple one: give the player a command which allows him to end the game. If a reboot of a disk operating system is desired, then ask the player to insert another disk and then initiate the reboot from within the program.

Treat Error Handling as an Afterthought

This sin, along with the next three, deals with the failure to make the program user-friendly, "idiot-proof," and reliable. Players are going to make mistakes, and the program has to be designed to allow it to detect and recover from errors as nicely as possible. Unfortunately, checking for errors is often the last part of a program put in, and is often done in haste and is incomplete. This is unfortunate for the developers as well as the players, since many delays in coding and testing would possibly have been avoided if the developers had included error handling in the design from the very beginning.

The solution is, of course, to treat error handling as an integral part of the program and to include it in the initial design.

Equate the Unlikely with the Impossible

One of the hardest parts of error handling is anticipating just what the users might do with (and to) the program. One of the deadliest sins is to say, "Oh, no one will ever do *that*," or, "That'll almost never happen, so we won't worry about it," simply because you can bet your hard disk that someone *will* do "that" or that "it" *will* happen. Here's an example. I was playing Creative Computing's *Super Invasion* and was down to my last tank. I had eliminated all but one of an invasion force and was trying to hit that last one as it zipped back and forth. I moved out from under shelter, fired, and hit it – just as one of its falling "worms" hit my tank. The result? The game "froze" at that point, and I had to turn off the computer in order to get out of it. Furthermore, the same thing happened two or three times to a good friend who spends more time playing the game than I did. I am almost certain that those involved in developing the program decided that it would almost never happen, if at all, and so didn't bother to check for that occurence.

The solution is two-fold. First, draw a clear line between the unlikely and the impossible. Know just what is happening at every step and define every possible state at that point. Second, make sure that your program reacts appropriately to the unlikely, *somehow*. Don't let the program's reaction to such situations be undefined (which brings us to Sin No. 9).

Let an Error go Undetected

In some games, you can make an invalid entry or choice of action, or force it into an impossible situation, and the game proceeds cheerfully onward, with resulta that are often unexpected and usually unpleasant. This situation is made worse when the player isn't aware that he's made an error and is suddenly faced with an apparently irrational program. This sin results in many players claiming that the program is "cheating" and often provokes computer phobia in those users who haven't had enough experience to know that the fault is usually due to laziness on the part of the developers, who didn't consider it worth the time to check all possible conditions at each point in the program.

The best solution here is to design the program so that it is easy to define all possible states at each part in the pargram, and to code it so that it is easy to check those states. BASIC does not lend itself well to such design and coding (becuase of having all global variables and not having dummy/formal parameters on subroutine calls, among other reasons), which is why this often crops up. As is true with most of these problems, a few days or weeks of careful design will prevent weeks or months of debugging and maintenance.

Let the Users Find Your Errors

This is a culmination of all the other sins: to do a sloppy job on a piece of software to be marketed, and then to sell it to consumers without adequate testing and debugging. This seems to occur most often when new firms release their first product; a glaring example of this is Edu-Ware's *Space,* which has a number of errors which could have been detected and corrected with about a week's testing (that's all it took *me* to find them – and I didn't even write the program). *Space* was Edu-Ware's first effort (see letters column, TSG 33), and they've gone on to produce some excellent software – but as far as I know, *Space* is still on the market, full of the same bugs that it's had for the last two or so years. Unfortunately, there are many other programs with similar problems.

The solution is to avoid problems that cuase it: poor design, poor coding, poor testing, and excessive eagerness to make money (i.e., greed). Someone else has recently complained about what he calls KTH's, or "Kitchen Table Hackers," and the software that they produce and sell. The same person commented that there may soon be a backlash among users who are tired of buying software packages that cost a lot and don't work. In fairness to the home cottage software industry, there are a lot of professional software packages, from IBM on down, which have equally grievious flaws caused by the same four reasons mentioned above. While the field of software engineering is young, there is no longer a real excuse for ignorance among those who would produce professional software (which I define as software that anyone else is going to buy, regardless of whether it was produced on an HP-41C or a CRAY-1). There are lots of seminars and college courses on the subject, and if you don't have the time and/or money for those, there are some excellent texts (two of which I mentioned in my last column).

I have seen all these errors in the many computer games I have played and reviewed, and they are especially irritating in light of the overblown prices charged for most games. However, they will not disappear until market forces are brought to bear, i.e., consumers stop buying lousy software. If you buy a program with bugs in it, I would suggest that you take the following steps:

(1) Write to the company and/or distributor with a well-documented explanation of your complaint. A few firms (Automated Simulations, Edu-Ware) now have warranties that cover computer errors, provided you act within the first 1 to 3 months. Unfortunately, bugs don't always show up that quickly, so even if such a warranty period has expired, complain anyway.

(2) Write to *The Space Gamer* and/or me with a review of the game or a letter outlining the problems you found. If you send in a review, you may even get paid for your efforts. But do something to get the word out before others blow $20-$30 on something that doesn't deserve that kind of money.

(3) An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Before spending your hard-earned money on a game, find out everything you can about it. Look for reviews (preferably two or three) in TSG and other magazines. Find someone who has the game and see it in action. See if your local computer store can demo it for you (which they should do before selling it to you). In short, spend you money carefully.

Next month will be a guest column by Joseph Power with a utility routine for rolling dice. I'll be back the following issue.

THE TRIBES OF CRANE

You, task chief of the Leopard people wandering tribe of crane, sit in your great wagon awaiting news from your swift searching outriders. Suddenly hoof beats approach. The outriders leap from their mounts to your wagon flushed with excitement for they know full well the meaning of their news. But one sector to the North the great merchant caravan of the Impala people has been spotted. The order is given, "To arms . . . to arms!" You snap your orders, "Gather my captains of hundreds. Let all know the tactic will be enfilade right. Now my arms, my mount." You heard that Kate, chief of the Impala people, has chosen a stand and defend tactic twice before, will he again? You know also that the Impala people are fine warriors as are all the people of the many tribes. This will be no raid of the strong on the weak, but rather a mighty clash of the **TRIBES OF CRANE . . .**

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The **Tribes of Crane** is a unique correspondence game, allowing for interaction between players and the fantasy world of Crane and each other through a continuous game that may be entered at any time.

As a new player you will start as the chief of one of the many wandering tribes of Crane. Perhaps your tribe will be of the Sea people or Caravan merchants.

As chief you will know many secrets of your people and their lands, but there will be much you have still to learn of the lost secrets of Crane. It will be you who decide if your people will remain in their familiar homeland or begin a journey to new lands as you strive to increase your herds, train warriors, and learn of the ancient lost secrets that can move your people toward prosperity and dominance.

The land of Crane is a complete fantasy world with a full range of geography from the permanent ice of the polar regions, to the deserts, and tropical forests of the equator.

Cities dot the continents of Crane providing centers of trade and homes for the powerful Shamans and KingLords.

The creatures of Crane are as varied as its geography. Cattle, goats, and the caribou are the mainstay of the tribes, depending on the geography. But horses and the great mancarrying war hawks are important to the fierce warriors. Many undomesticated creatures also inhabit Crane such as the Euparkeria, a huge bipedal lizard that feeds on cattle in the grasslands of Crane.

Interaction between players is very common. Alliance, trade, and combat are always possible. Combat is determined in part by a comparison of tactics used by the antagonists, the relative number of warriors, and the geography.

The games objective is to increase the relative strength and prosperity of your tribe which is measured by different criteria, depending upon the type of tribe, and thus obtain points. Players try to obtain high average points per turn thus placing new players on a par with those who have been playing longer.

The Tribes of Crane may be entered for $10.50 which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased for $3.50.

Company Report:

Fantasy Games Unlimited

FGU is a game company run by gamers. We have never been a development house. We are publishers. Most of our games have always come from free-lance designers. Is seems to end up that some of these free-lancers like the way we do things and tend to "stick with us" and do more games for us. Even those designers who have several titles published by us are not employees of the company, but are free-lance designers with close ties to FGU. (But they often feel like employees in that they are often included in policy decision making and editorial decisions.)

From this framework it is easy to see why FGU's games need not have terribly much in common with each other. The only factor we can guarantee they have in common is that we liked them when we played them. As gamers we are involved in role playing, miniatures, and board games so that our games will be in all of these categories. Some areas, like WWII boardgames, have been so overdone that many of us find it difficult to get excited over one more game of this kind. FGU does not do WWII or modern boardgames.

Our past direction can be best summed up by the phrase "make it complete!" We always attempted to include any relevant information in our products. This included army organizations and uniform descriptions in our historical or fantasy miniatures rules, and everything conceivable in our role playing games. We believe incomplete games are by definition ripoffs.

The result of this attitude has been products like *Chivalry & Sorcery*. Some readers will approve of the completeness of the game, while others are frightened by the huge size and seeming complexity of the rules. This is a problem we are only beginning to come to grips with. It appears that gamers can accept a set number of rules if they are introduced gradually over a series of books. But they are overwhelmed by the same number of rules when they are all provided at one time in a single volume. As gamers, we wanted to keep our prices down and yet cram it all in one book. Were we right? For some gamers, yes. For others, we were too complete. The end result is that C&S is as often used as a reference sourcebook for other games as it is used as a game system on its own.

Another ongoing direction has been to look for areas, usually obvious, which are suited to role play but which have not yet been done. Examples of this are *Gangster!* and *Skull & Crossbones.* We have been caught off guard a few times when we have a product in the works and a game does come out on the subject prior to our own game. Examples of this are *Land of the Rising Sun* and *Villains & Vigilantes.* In these cases we believed the games had to be so good that we published them without worry about the products already on the market.

We've learned a number of lessons from both our mistakes and successes. We have already begun to introduce somewhat easier games to organize. This is exemplified by *Villains & Vigilantes* and *Skull & Crossbones.* Yet, we still seek to make the games relatively complete in a single package. Similar projects are in the works for fantasy, science fiction, and the Old West.

Perhaps our biggest mistake is leading to the major change in our future direction. This relates to my personal refusal to market "scenarios." I had always believed that such products were a marketing gimmick as players were fully capable of creating their own scenarios and many would feel almost obligated to buy such products from us since they carried the logo of the game they were playing. I felt that gamers did not really need or want these things, and was I ever wrong. I guess I just didn't pay enough attention to the mail.

We now realize that scenarios assist gamers to fully understand what is intended by a set of rules, and helps a new gamemaster to launch a campaign. Once the game is played, it can be enjoyed and the gamer is more sure of getting his money's worth. Anyway, the constant letters requesting such game aids are no longer falling on deaf ears.

We are now working more closely with people like Judges Guild and Gamescience to encourage such game aids. Additionally, we will be releasing similar products of our own as demonstrated by our December '80 release of *Pieces of Eight,* an expansion for *Skull & Crossbones* with 3 complete scenarios, 1 miniscenario, and several additional scenario ideas. Similar scenarios are in the works for *Space Opera* and for C&S and we have already approved the first Judges Guild scenario for *Villains & Vigilantes.*

Another change in future direction relates to boardgames. Traditionally, we have released one or two boardgames each year and have stuck to non-WWII subjects. Although we will continue to avoid WWII and modern games, we realize that our limited number of titles has made us a relatively unknown quantity to many gamers who are not involved in role playing or miniatures. Thus, we plan increased boardgame production while continuing to emphasize science fiction and fantasy subjects, as we have done since the company was started in '75. We will also remain consistent in producing boardgames of relatively low complexity.

It must seem strange to some that we have always preferred "complex" role playing games and "simple" boardgames, but this is a reflection of editorial taste. A boardgame should be playable in a single evening. This means learning the rules before eating dinner and playing the entire game in that same evening after dinner, but finishing it in time to make it to work (with a reasonable amount of sleep) the next day.

This year will see the release of two science fiction boardgames (*Diadem* and *Gateworld*) and one "role playing boardgame" of wagon trains in the old west called *Oregon Trail.* These are already scheduled for release in March, May, and July and there may be more by the end of the year.

Thus, the future direction of FGU will be to continue the types of products that have made us successful and to begin to emphasize game aids for our games in response to the demands of gamers. Boardgames will begin to be emphasized to a greater degree as we hope to make ourselves known to more of the boardgamers who are, as yet, unfamiliar with our products.

Scott B. Bizar
Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc.

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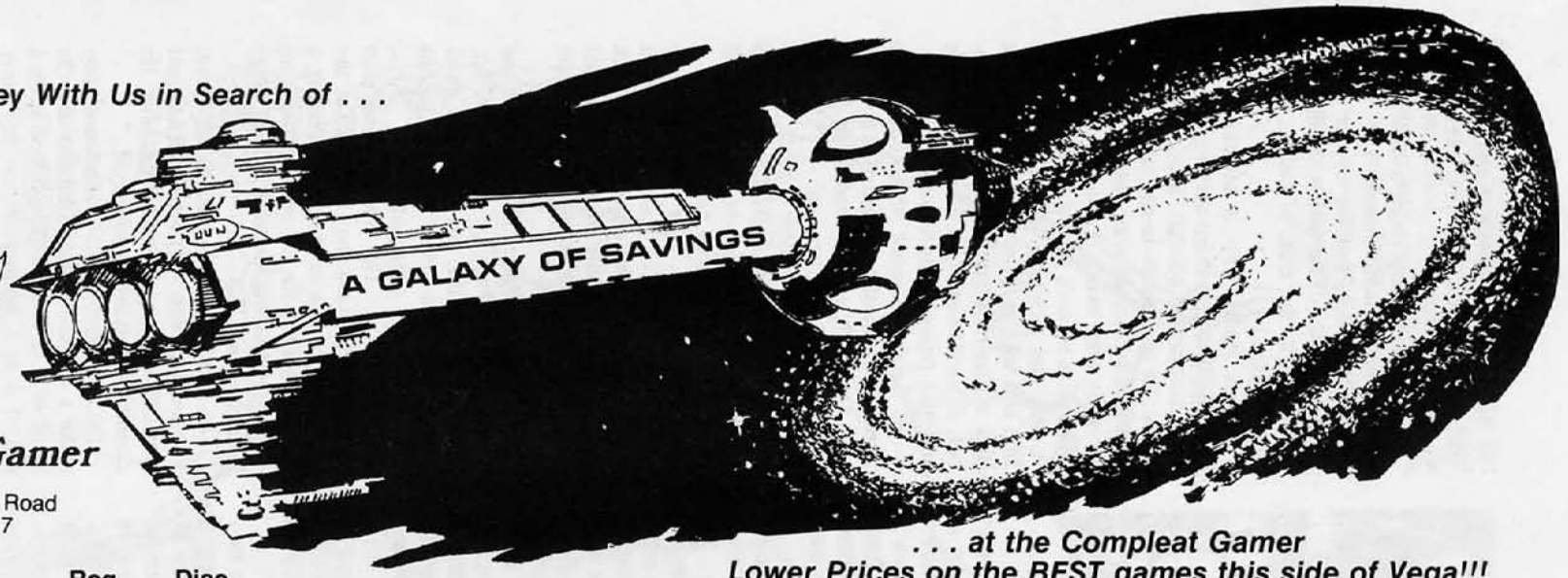

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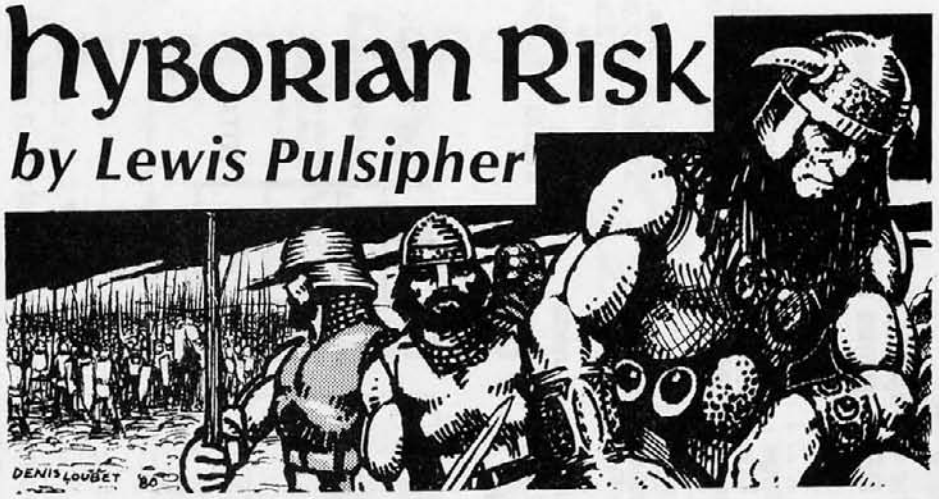
Hyborian Risk

by Lewis Pulsipher



Risk is a simple but popular wargame. Lying midway between the "family" boardgame and the wargame, it presents an abstracted battle for control of the world. To add flavor to the game, many have tinkered with the system, adding more types of pieces and changing the map. One such variant follows. The prosaic world map has been transformed to represent the feuding kingdoms of the age of that mightiest of fictional heroes . . . Conan of Cimmeria.

Use the standard *Risk* rules, with these changes:

1. **The Map.** You will need to reproduce the game map shown – a large-sized rough copy can be drawn freehand in a few minutes. Be sure the relationships between the different countries are correct. Note that there are two different types of dividing lines: solid and dashed. *Areas* are each named, and are divided by dashed lines. *Territories* are made up of two or more areas each, and are divided by solid lines. Some areas contain *strongpoints*, shown by circles.

2. **Initial Placement.** Take armies and place them according to the standard rules of *Risk*. However, each player should note where his first army is placed. He may not place any subsequent army farther than three areas away unless there is no open area within that range. For instance, if a player's first army goes in Zarkheba, he may not place any armies in Argos, Korshemish, Koth, Khoraja, Iranistan, Vendhya, or any area farther from Zarkheba than those named. However, if there is no unoccupied area near enough to Zarkheba, he may place his armies in any unoccupied area. After all armies are down, players place their leaders (see below).

3. **Stacking.** A maximum of seven armies is allowed in any area. If a player has seven armies in each area, any further reinforcements are lost permanently. He cannot get more reinforcements until he can place them without violating stacking limits.

4. **Reinforcements.** In the first round of turns, each player gets three armies as reinforcements. In subsequent turns, players get reinforcements as follows:

(a) Minimum reinforcements: Each player always gets at least three armies. (Note that this is a *minimum*, not a base number.)

(b) Reinforcements for strongpoints: A player gets one army for each *strongpoint* he controls.

(c) Reinforcement for territories: A player gets one extra army for each complete *territory* he controls. For example, if a player holds North Cimmeria and South Cimmeria he would receive three armies: one for the territory and one for each strongpoint. Players cannot share armies for territories jointly occupied.

When a player receives reinforcements, he may place them as he wishes in any area(s) he controls, so long as the stacking rule is not violated.

5. **Cards.** Each time a player turns in a set of cards, regardless of the number of cards turned in in the past, he receives three armies and one leader.

6. **Leaders.** Each player receives two leaders at the beginning of the game (regardless of the number of players in the game). Use the ten-army counters to represent leaders. Properties of a leader are as follows:

(a) Each leader may make a "free move" at the end of the player's turn. This is in addition to his normal "free move" for armies. However, no player may free-move a leader twice in one turn or make a free move that leaves an area vacant.

(b) The presence of a leader allows a player to roll one extra die in combat, up to three for an attacker or two for a defender. Example: A leader with one army could roll two dice for EITHER attack or defense. A leader alone could still roll two dice to defend. In no case may a player ever roll more than two dice to defend or three to attack; multiple leaders may stack in an area but have no extra effect.

(c) A player may count a leader as an army when taking losses. The player losing the armies has the option to use a leader instead if he wishes. (If there are no armies in the area, of course, leaders must be lost.)

(d) A leader who is attacked, with or without armies in his area, may choose to retreat before combat. Before dice are rolled, he may move to any adjacent area where he has units (or any vacant area). If no such area exists, he must stand and fight. If a leader's retreat leaves an area vacant, the attacking player must enter that area with at least one unit. In no case may a player retreat armies before combat. A leader *may* fight for several rounds and then retreat, if he survives.

(e) Leaders cannot attack by themselves; there must be an army in the same area; However, a single leader can defend by himself, rolling two dice.

(f) In advancing after combat, leaders move like armies. A player may choose to advance leader(s) instead of armies, if both are in an attacking area.

7. **Vacant Areas.** It is possible for an area to become entirely vacant. A vacant area is controlled by no one; any attack on it is automatically successful. Vacant areas may also be entered by free moves or retreats.

8. **Optional Rule: Thoth-Amon and Conan.** If you haven't thrown them out, there are two cards in your *Risk* deck which can add a little "chrome" to this variant.

Thoth-Amon: The player who draws the trademark card may reveal it at the beginning of his next turn, receiving a special leader – the wizard Thoth-Amon. This Stygian necromancer is like other leaders, except that

(a) In place of his regular free-move, Thoth-Amon can teleport to any vacant area OR any area where he has units. He cannot use this power to retreat.

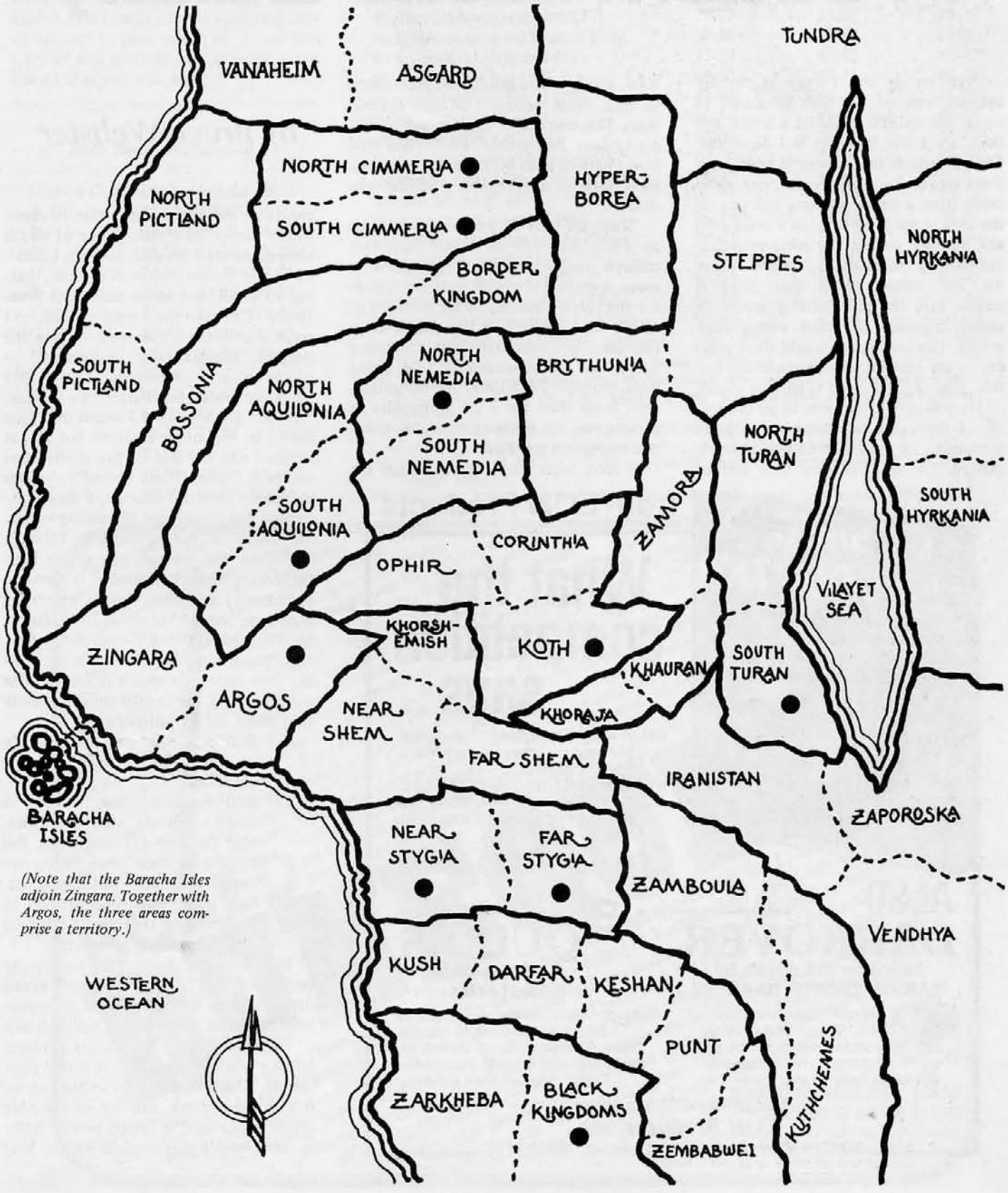
(b) Once per turn, Thoth-Amon may make a magical attack. Roll one die. On a roll of 1, 2, or 3, nothing happens. On a roll of 4 or 5, he may remove one army from any adjacent area. On a roll of 6, he may remove two armies OR one leader. Note that neither of these powers can be used except on Thoth-Amon's player's turn.

Conan: The player who draws the blank card can turn it in at the beginning of his next turn for Conan himself. Conan is all but invulnerable. If Conan is the attacker, no die roll will eliminate him at all (though if all armies in his area are lost, he must stop attacking that turn).

If he is the defender, he will be the last defending unit to be lost. Then, instead of being killed, he merely retreats. He may retreat into any adjacent area which contains units friendly to him, or is vacant. Conan cannot be slain unless he has nowhere to retreat to, or he is killed by the magic of Thoth-Amon.

Players who have Conan or Thoth-Amon keep the cards unless those characters are lost in combat – the card for that character is then returned to the deck and may be drawn again.

Conan and Thoth-Amon may be represented by different-colored leader counters, coins, etc. In our playtest session, we used Cardboard Heroes for them: 1-2, the Barbarian, makes a perfect Conan, while 1-21, the Elven Wizard, makes a pretty fair black-robed Thoth-Amon.



(Note that the Baracha Isles adjoin Zingara. Together with Argos, the three areas comprise a territory.)

Improved Mission Resolution for

Freedom in the Galaxy

by Bruce Webster

Freedom in the Galaxy is, in my opinion, one of the best SF games to come out of SPI for quite a while, but there are a few things in it I don't like. One of these is the manner in which missions are resolved. Briefly put, one draws cards from a deck, checking one part of the card to see if the mission was resolved and another part to see what event occurred. My statistics experience makes me feel uneasy about this, since it means that the successful outcome of certain missions is linked with certain events. This correlation would allow players to use certain mission-resolution tactics that I feel aren't entirely valid.

My solution to this was to go through all of the cards and determine (1) the probability of each mission being accomplished for each environ class (urban, wild, and special), and (2) the probability of each event occuring in each environ class. This resulted in the two tables that accompany this article. I'll explain first how I derived each of the tables, and then show how to use them in resolving missions.

There are only 30 mission event cards in *FitG*, but 2/3 of them have *two* mission resolution letters per environ; more specifically, there were 51 letters for the urban environ, 50 for special, and 49 for wild. To simplify the table, I dropped one "G" resolution from urban and added one "S" resolution to wild, giving each environ 50 letters. By definition, each letter then has a 2% probability of coming up. By grouping all identical letters together, I got Table A.

I took even more liberties with the events on the cards. There were 30 cards, which meant 30 events (some of which were duplicates) for each environ. I decided to add 3 events to each environ, making 33 in all, and assign each a 3% probability. This gave me a total of 99%, so I created an entirely new event – "any one mission automatically completed" – which had a 1% probability and thus gave me a complete distribution. To increase "urban," I simply used 3 events that were found in the other environs but not in urban. I also did this for two of the extra events in "special" and one of the extras in "wild;" for the balance, I simply increased the occurrence of existing events. The result of this is found in Table B.

To use this method, you simply need these two tables (permission is given to photocopy) and some way of generating a random number from 00 to 99 (or 01 to 100, with 100 = 00) – percentile dice, calculators, computers, or whatever. Then for each time you would normally draw a card during the regular mission resolution phase, do the following:

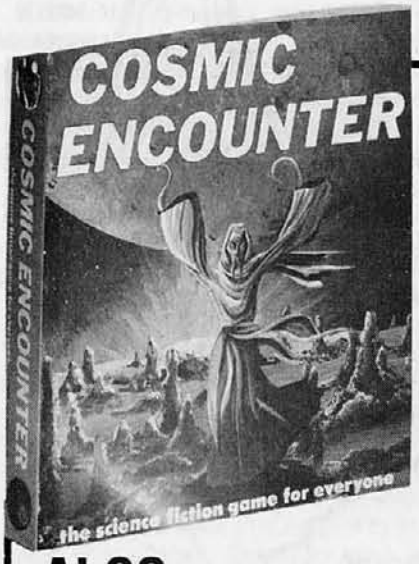
(1) Roll percentile dice and look up event on Table B; take appropriate action;

(2) Roll percentile dice; if value is 01-66 then do step (3) twice, else do step (3) just once; this adjusts for some cards having two letters and others just having one;

(3) Roll percentile dice and refer to Table A to see if any missions were successfully completed.

For the bonus draw phase, you simply perform steps (2) and (3) for each bonus draw (though the roll then only applies to the mission receiving the bonus draw).

This method may seem rather involved, but it works very smoothly in actual playtesting. I have these tables written up on 8 x 5 index cards, and the non-phasing player looks up the results on the tables as the phasing player made his (or her)



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rolls. After a while, we had memorized the rolls needed for the more common missions (such as "Diplomacy"), as well as some of the more dreaded events ("Creature attacks party!"), speeding up the process even more. Perhaps the greatest benefit, though, was the elimination of the constant shuffling of the misson event cards and the agonizing over which card to pick. All in all, I find that I prefer this method over drawing cards. I think that you will, too.

Table A
Rolls Needed to Succeed

Mission Code	*Urban*	*Special*	*Wild*
A	01-04	01-02	01-02
B	05-10	03-10	03-12
C	11-20	11-20	13-20
D	21-28	21-26	21-26
E	29-34	27-32	27-32
F	35-44	33-44	33-42
G	45-52	45-50	43-48
H	53-58	51-56	49-54
I	59-66	57-62	55-60
J	67-68	63-64	61-62
P	69-76	65-72	63-72
Q	77-78	73-74	73-74
R	79-86	75-86	75-84
S	87-96	87-96	85-96
T	97-00	97-00	97-00

Table B

Event (ref)[1]	*Urban*	*Special*	*Wild*
creature attacks[2] (68)	01-09	01-12	01-12
irate locals attack (71)	10-15	13-15	13-15
rebels chicken out (73)	16-18	16-18	16-18
enemy agent reveals mission (74)	19-21	19-21	19-21
locals shelter characters (76)	22-24	22-24	22-24
weather hampers searchers (77)	25-27	25-33	25-33
local connections aid mission (78)	28-36	34-39	34-39
wrong soldier contacted (81)	37-39	40-42	40-42
civil war breaks out (82)	40-42	43-45	43-45
locals raid enemy forces (83)	43-48	46-48	46-48
populace goes wild (85)	49-54	49-54	49-54
characters detected[3] (75)	55-66	55-63	55-63
food poisoning hits characters (87)	67-69	64-66	64-69
characters delayed by rumors (88)	70-72	67-69	70-72
atrocity allowed[4] (89)	73-75	70-72	73-75
confusing local protocol (90)	76-78	73-78	76-81
controversial politics argued (91)	79-81	79-81	82-84
coup mission aborted (92)	82-90	82-90	85-90
accident – 1 wound (81-S)	91-93	91-93	91-93
stumble upon enemy squad (88-S)	94-96	94-96	94-96
ignore all "creature attacks" (92-W)	97-99	97-99	97-99
any one mission automatically achieved	00	00	00

Notes

(1) The number in parentheses refers to the mission event card that the description of this event can be found on. Look under "Urban" unless another environ type (S,W) is indicated.

(2) If no creature exists in that environ, roll a six-sided die. On 1 or 2, nothing happens; on 3 or 4, you are attacked by one sentry robot; on 5 or 6, by *two* sentry robots.

(3) Roll a six-sided die; on 1-3 the non-phasing player can conduct a search (1-4 if an "Urban" environ).

(4) This only applies in the Galactic Game; otherwise, treat it as an uneventful event.

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GAME DESIGN:
Theory and Practice

Part XI: Research

by Schuessler and Jackson

"Research" in wargaming is an area where mythology abounds. Consider these statements: "Wargames should be researched." "The library is the best place for research." "Keep your notes on 3 x 5 cards." "Check the card catalogue first." "The encyclopedia doesn't make a good research source." After each of these, we could properly append a firm, "Not true." The myths about research come from many sources: your freshman English teacher, the attitude of librarians, offset printing technology and the "print explosion," and the mysticism that surrounds the whole concept of "research" (high tech, Silicon Valley, NASA, and think tanks).

But in the nuts-and-bolts world of wargame design, there are some basic truths. Research in wargaming is "applied," as opposed to "pure," research. That is, its only reason for being is to produce the wargame. We are not seeking self-enrichment, Truth, or new knowledge for our "discipline." Applied research is pragmatic research; its final test is the cost/benefit ratio.

Second, research is very, very expensive in terms of time, money, and usually both. Occasionally we've talked about "faking it," and other kinds of corner-cutting in game development. This kind of discussion may scandalize the purists, but it accurately reflects the problem of research costs.

Third, there is often little correlation between the time and money expended and the research results. A massive research effort (even a well-designed one) can often result in scanty or obvious information. By the same token, some fairly amateurish knocking about may result in gold mines of data.

Naturally, our ideal would be a "full dress" effort, complete with a study design, a full literature survey, a careful sifting and reconciliation of sources, and footnotes and bibliographical information to prove that it all happened. However, if the ideal isn't practical (it usually isn't) we can at least work on some more expedient approaches.

Get Thee to the Library

Actually, you don't need to go the library right away if you have a home encyclopedia. Your first stop should always be the encyclopedia (*Britannica* or *Americana* only; *World Book* is a comic strip which should be shunned). This will give you a context for your game design, and lead you to some references to begin library-type research. If you're doing a Civil War battle, reading the section on the war will show how your battle fit into the broader situation. If you're doing a game with a medieval setting, the encyclopedia will give the background flavor needed for development. In short, it's the best and most economical introduction you will find.

Now it's off to the library, right? Wrong again. In deference to the librarians, we'll grant that libraries are, by themselves, good things. Repositories of books are one of the few morally neutral things left in our modern culture. However, all libraries are not created equal. Before we waste our hours, we must consider just what it is we seek.

Back in freshman English, Mrs. Jones or Mr. Smith extolled the virtues of the library. The point of the course was to get you physically into the library (it's just south of the football stadium), force you to paw over the card catalogue for a while, and to require you to crank out a semi-literate term paper. But that was not research. It was a research exercise, something only marginally related.

Your term paper was fashioned by the availability of library materials. That is, you collected what was available and crafted it into a paper.

Wargame design requires nearly opposite effort. Here, your topic dictates your research. Having decided to do a game on, say, Kursk, you must deal with the terrain, the order of battle, and other critical aspects – regardless of whether the library happens to stock such information. It is possible to manipulate the design to cover gaps in the research; in fact, designers have a term for it: "playability." But the scope to maneuver is very narrow. As I said before, wargame design is applied research.

So before leaving for the library, we first ask: Will our particular library have the materials we need? If you live in a town of 100,000 or less, your library is not exactly the New York City Public Library. There will be fewer works on your topic, and they will be much more general in nature. Research is best done at a *research* library, and this means a million or more volumes, inter-library loan facilities, and some heavy-duty references (the *National Serials Catalog*, for example). Usually you find this kind of establishment in a big city, or at a major research university, or both.

Of course, a municipal operation of moderate size might be useful to supplement your background reading. Or the general works might have some bibliographical information to point you to other sources. The question is whether you want to invest the time for these marginal returns, or immediately move on to other approaches.

Fiddle and Faddle

You can waste a lot of time in a library. The larger the library, the more opportunity for waste. Working in a library is very much like assembling a carburetor: eventually you'll get it right, it just depends on how many times you want to do it over.

Before shuffling over to the card catalogue, we should discuss note-taking. The old-timey kind of note-taking that Mr. Smith and your freshman textbook talked about is generally a waste of time. These procedures were developed back when you could only check out three books at a time, and Mr. Xerox hadn't invented his famous machine. Copying down bibliographic entries and long quotes is tedious and frustrating.

Notes and Copies

If your notes aren't clean, you're wasting your time. Pose a question: Could these notes be used for another game design two years hence? If not, then think of the tree that was cut down to make the pencil you wasted.

Whenever you can, check the book out; that will allow you to examine it at leisure. If it's a reference book or uncirculated periodical, use the photocopier. (Most libraries keep the costs on their photocopiers low to provide a reasonable alternative to the razor blade. And the neanderthals that razor books should be stuffed with nails and have their library

cards revoked.) Tables and charts are especially good candidates for the photocopier. Since you're designing a game and not writing a term paper, you need a summary of the facts, not a lot of direct quotes.

Stalking the Stacks

Now it's finally time for the card catalogue. But don't write down fifty call numbers. Instead, check the topic under the "Subject" heading and find out where all the books on the subject are located. We're really not interested in individual titles at this point, and we're especially not interested in books that aren't on the shelves. No matter how intriguing the title might be, if it's not there when we are, it's of no earthly use. Of course, you can always ask the librarian to hold it for you. The small fee charged for this is worth it.

Once we get to the stacks, we begin to paw. This involves reading the titles (the crick in your neck is a small sacrifice to the profession), pulling out interesting-looking volumes and thumbing through. We're looking for the scholarly, detailed works that will have enough grit to get us through a game design. As a minimum, there should be an index, bibliography, some maps, and maybe some charts or tables. Slender tomes usually aren't worth bothering with. Another category to be avoided is the "primary source material," i.e., diaries, after-action reports, and most autobiographies. Usually some university-type has digested these "primary sources" into a more usable "secondary source." No point in doing it over again, even if you had the time and expertise. "Official histories" present a special problem. B.H. Liddell Hart is quoted as saying that the first word cancelled out the second. These "official" works are of some value, but should be checked against other sources.

If you have access to a really large library, don't overlook the map section. It may be buried – but it's worth unearthing. You may be surprised at how many maps are available for your area of interest (or how much they differ). Any map can be redrawn, and some (especially the older ones) may not be copyrighted.

If you're a weekly library goer, your haul should be about four or five books. One a day is quite a load, and may add overdue fines to your cost/benefit ratio. After "how many?" the next obvious question is "what to take?" An ultra-formal type will have a study design all prepared. Lacking this luxury, we can say, as a rule of thumb, that research moves from the general to the specific. The first shot should be at the broad outlines of the game: mapping, terrain, order of battle, unit characteristics, etc. As you move along, the research should narrow down to fill the specific gaps in the design.

Book Stores and Book Clubs

The great advantage of the library is that (except for photocopy costs) the most you can waste is time. All of the other research sources involve cash, and must be approached more carefully. In the past few years, the prices on books has made this source even more hazardous. During the '70s, a scholarly work came in at the $15-20 range. Now we're seeing the really good stuff moving up to the $30-40 level.

I approach the purchase of a book with an elaborate ritual that is designed to "prove" to myself that I really need the thing. First, I never buy a book on the first or second visit to the bookstore; I look at least twice. Second, I try to limit my purchases to what I would consider "reference material" – sources of a highly technical nature. I deliberately avoid things with too much commentary or too many photographs. Whenever possible, I try to get the book at the library for a pre-sale examination. And, of course, I buy the paperback edition whenever it is available – even if it involves a special order.

One very irritating class of books (especially for the wargamer) is the "Christmas rip-off." These over-sized, over-priced things have flashy jackets, very common photos, and usually an abysmal text. Their tag derives from the fact that dear old Aunt Minnie, knowing of your peculiar hobby, thought that it would be the perfect thing at Yuletide. A waste of shelf space.

Two alternatives to new books are used books and the book clubs. Of these, the used book store is the safest proposition; you get everything you get at the full-priced place, except the price and the availability. Book clubs require a bit more finesse. The main drawback is, you buy before you look. I make it a point never to buy the "featured selection." And I try to examine the "alternates" at the library before purchase. Still, I consider The Military Book Club (Garden City, New York, 11530) to be one of the real unsung heroes in the hobby, offering probably the best bargains around.

Games and Gaming Magazines

A third alternative is other wargames and gaming magazines. Certainly, you should at least be familiar with the other titles – a sort of "literature survey." The rules, maps, and designer's notes are all a valid research source. (At this point we'll avoid discussing plagiarism and copyright law.) (*And observing what a previous designer MISSED can be as instructive as checking over what he included.*)

Gaming magazines have the advantage of specializing in game-oriented articles. They're a good bet, if you can find an article on your area of interest. Gaming mags are usually as well written as their more scholarly counterparts, and (disbelief) are relatively low-priced considering the scope of the material.

Other magazines can help, too – learn what the ***Guide to Periodical Literature*** *is and how to use it. If your project is a modern-period game, the various newsmagazines, science magazines, and what-not will be of assistance. If you're working on WWII, think about* ***National Geographic****. And if you know what you're looking for (or have the time to browse), there are LOTS of fantasy and SF magazines sitting around to provide inspiration for the designer in that area.*

Bell, Book, and Candle

Finally, we should note the virtues of *not* researching a wargame. No library, no bookstores, no gaming magazines. A low-complexity design by a person who has been reading casually in the subject area for many years may not require anything more than what's already in the grey matter and on the home library shelf. In any number of cases, the dutiful trip to the library and bookstores isn't really going to add very much. You know just about what you want to do, and just about how you want to do it. Why bother wasting the hours to get to an identical result?

This can be especially true in SF and fantasy gaming. By and large, the audiences for this game are less interested in any form of "reality," and won't recognize a silly glitch or care about it if they notice it. Thus we get games where shields make you 5% harder to hit, or SF epics where one turn (during which many things happen) works out to 1/30 of a second. "Simulating" the unreal (or totally unfamiliar) has its advantages.

What's going to make a game design "work" is the combat system and the playtesting. The purpose of research is to enhance the basic feel and accouterments. All the research in the world won't redeem a bad combat system; no amount of research can be substituted for playtesting. In the end, applied research must be applied, and bad game with footnotes is still a bad game.

Next: Component Design

Capsule Reviews

THE SPACE GAMER reviews board games, role-playing games, computer games, video games, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical wargames. TSG may publish a review of a game we are not sent – IF a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games for which reviews have been assigned or received include: *Arena of Death, The Astrogators Chartbook, The C&S Sourcebook, Cardboard Heroes, D&D Dungeon Geomorphs, Duel Arcane, Expert D&D, The Hammer of Thor, One-Page Bulge, Parsector V, Sewers of Oblivion, Slag, Swords & Sorcerers, Thieves' Guild, Voyage of the Pandora,* and *Warlock* (Games Workshop).

Specific games for which we are seeking reviews include: *Apocalypse, Dark Stars, Dr. Who, Kung Fu 2100, Nebula 19,* and *Star Fleet Battles* (boxed ed.).

CITADEL OF BLOOD (SPI); $6.00. Designed by Eric Smith. One 8½" x 11" 12-page rulebook, 200 die-cut counters, 3 dice, boxed. One to six players; playing time 2-3 hours. Published 1980.

CITADEL OF BLOOD uses the game-system of *Deathmaze*, and characters and background from *Swords & Sorcery*. It is a dungeon adventure fantasy game which can be played solitaire. It is a boardgame without a board; the maze is made up and populated during play from randomly-selected chits.

CITADEL OF BLOOD is quick, simple, and fun. The maze changes every game. The players have a definite objective, as opposed to just wandering around fighting monsters. (They are trying to destroy the Hellgate.) The play-balance is very good, and the game usually comes right down to the wire. Also, several magic spells are added to those of *Deathmaze*. The rules are complete and well-written.

The biggest problem with CITADEL OF BLOOD is that it is so much like *Deathmaze* that some gamers will feel ripped off. The two games have nearly identical rules and tables, and a very similar flavor. Also, gamers should be aware that these two games, being short and simple, do not have all the color and detail of a larger FRP game.

CITADEL OF BLOOD is recommended to fans of *Deathmaze* and to fantasy gamers who want something to play when they don't have the time for a bigger game.

–Keith Gross

THE EMERALD TABLET (Creative Wargames Workshop); $6.95. Designed by Joseph Miceli, Tom Loback, and Jay Facciolo. One 8½" x 11" book with separate play aid sheets. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1977.

At first glance this set of fantasy miniatures rules has everything the player could want: comprehensive rules on selecting and building virtually any army from before the Thirty Years War; detailed battle magic rules; and an extremely realistic combat system based upon the cumulative advantages one unit has over another. Unfortunately, the rules suffer from just these attractions. There is simply too much to absorb, too many charts and minutiae, too poorly organized and presented.

There are two bright spots in the game: the unit creation and ceremonial magic systems. Units are "purchased" according to costs assigned for various levels of characteristics such as height, weight, weaponry, endurance, and so on. There is even a cost for sacrificial victims! You can create units as diverse as King Tut's spearmen, Darius' elephants, or Agamemnon's priests. You can also use the system to quantitatively compare units when designing new games.

As good as the unit creation system is, it is inferior to the ceremonial magic system. Separate cut-out sheets yield magic circles, talismans, demons and angels from the medieval grimoires. Just as in the grimoires, casting spells is serious and risky business; an enchanter can go mad. It is realistic, it is colorful, and it requires a player assigned solely to handle the magic. Consequently, although the game is designed for two players, I recommend team play.

By itself, THE EMERALD TABLET is too complicated and requires too much effort to be enjoyed by any but the most hardcore gamer. However, given the main competition, TSR's *Swords and Spells* and *Chainmail,* THE EMERALD TABLET is clearly superior. If you want a game that can show what magic was like under the tutelage of Albertus Magnus or with the Key of Solomon, this is your game. If that's not what you want, stay well away.

–Glenn Williams

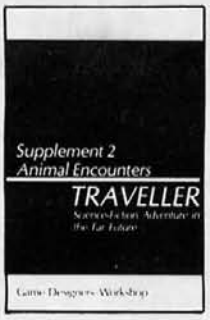
KNIGHTS AND KNAVES (Nimrod Game Development); $10. Designed by Albert Nofi. Boxed, with 17" x 21" paper mapboard, 500 die-cut counters, 8-page rulebook, die. 4-10 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1979.

KNIGHTS AND KNAVES attempts to simulate "the intricate relationships of the lords and vassals of a large, loosely organized Empire located somewhere in Central Europe during the High Middle Ages." Three winners emerge, assuming a game is played to completion: the richest, the strongest, and the most landed each are declared victors.

K&K is 60% of a very good medieval simu-

ABBREVIATIONS

AC = armor class
AD&D = *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*
AH = The Avalon Hill Company
APA = amateur press association (sometimes action point allowance)
BEM = bug-eyed monster
CHA (or CHR) = charisma
CON = constitution
CPM = control process monitor
c.p. = copper piece(s)
CR = credit(s)
C&S = *Chivalry and Sorcery*
CRT = combat results table (sometimes cathode ray tube, i.e., TV screen)
d = die (3d6 means three 6-sided dice)
D&D = *Dungeons and Dragons*
DM = dungeon master (sometimes die modifier)
DX (or DEX) = dexterity
EHP = evil high priest
e.p. = experience point(s) (sometimes electrum piece(s))
EPT – *Empire of the Petal Throne*
FBI = Flying Buffalo, Inc.
FGU = Fantasy Games Unlimited
FRP(G) = fantasy role-playing (game)
GAMA = Games Manufacturers Association
GDW = Games Designers' Workshop
GM = game master
g.p. = gold piece(s)
h.p. = hit point(s)
HTK = hits to kill
IQ (or INT) = intelligence
K = kilo-bytes of memory
LGM = little green men
LK = luck
MA = movement allowance (sometimes magical/military/mechanical aptitude/ability)
MR = monster rating
MU = magic user
NPC = non-player character
OSG = Operational Studies Group
OSI = Ohio Scientific
PBM = play by mail
PET = Personal Electronic Transactor (by Commodore)
POW = power
RAM = random-access memory
ROM = read-only memory
S&T = *Strategy and Tactics*
SF&F = science fiction and fantasy
SIZ = size
s.p. = silver piece(s)
SPI = Simulations Publications, Inc.
SR = saving roll (sometimes strike rank)
ST (or STR) = strength
T&T = *Tunnels and Trolls*
TFG = Task Force Games
TFT = *The Fantasy Trip*
TRS = Tandy-Radio Shack
TSR = TSR Hobbies, Inc. (formerly Tactical Studies Rules)
UPP = Universal Personality Profile
WIS = wisdom
ZOC = zone of control



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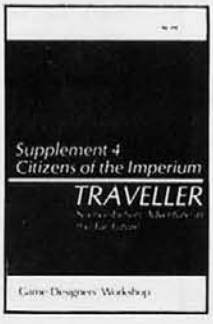

lation. Long and thoughtful preparation went into developing the concept. Some very nice touches have been included, such as the possibility of one patriarch (read "pope") excommunicating another, or a noble's inability to attack another noble because of an unasked-for marriage.

The game has severe problems, however, the most glaring of which is the awful graphics. The map is done in five colors: light gray, dull blue, dull gray-blue, bright tan, and dull tan. There is a minimal indexing system (on a separate sheet) to help locate 68 arbitrary realms, some of near-microscopic size. Possession of specific blocks of realms entitles a player to extra power – you have to find a separate listing of which realms they are, though, since they aren't marked on the board. All of the counters are black and white. Have you ever tried to play a multi-player game with 150 B&W counters in a one-square-foot area?

The other major problem is in various rule gaps, particularly in the combat system. Die roll adjusts are possible, yet the combat table only lists results for rolls of one to six. Much jostling about is possible during the combat period, but when the smoke clears, it is often difficult to detect any change. The only way to capture a noble or his troops, much less kill them, is to bankrupt him first. This is difficult when he only averages a one or two percent loss in treasure per combat defeat.

K&K was obviously stripped down to make it a $10 game. For a little extra, it could be an excellent $12 game. I wish the effort had been made.

–David Ladyman

MAGE (Archaeron Games, Ltd.); $5.95. Designed by Wilf Backhaus. Magic module of Archaeron Game System. One 42-page 8½" x 5¼" rulebook. Number of players and playing time variable. Published 1980.

By a co-designer of C&S, MAGE is intended to supplement an existing fantasy campaign, or be used separately as rules for magical combat.

There are three innovative features. First is the way player-characters advance in ability. Called "expertise," the method has no connection with monster-killing or treasure-looting. Once a game-year, the player makes a die roll to increase in ability and, as a bonus for the brave and lucky, may be allowed an "extraordinary performance" check more often. Second, the concept of "strain," where a character may increase his chance of success by taking a "strain check." If successful, he gets a one-time bonus; if not, he takes varying amounts of damage. Third, clerical magic is related to the relative power of the particular god that the cleric worships. The ranking and abilities of the gods are decided by the referee and players.

The spells listed in MAGE are the old D&D spells with some of the names changed. In a campaign, the mages will be "heavy weapons" for the fighting men. Magical duels tend to be short and bloody.

The main problem with MAGE is that it requires a throrough and imaginative referee. Since such referees are always in short supply, using MAGE in your campaign is likely to be quite disappointing. On the other hand, if you use it for the one-on-one magical combat, it promises all the excitement of the last Duran-Leonard fight.

–Lloyd W. Willis

SHOOTING STARS (Yaquinto); $16.00. Designed by Stephen Peek. Box includes 20-page rulebook, 21½" x 27½" paper map, a game tables card, a sheet of die-cut counters, four cardstock "control consoles," 8 ship specification cards, and two dice. One to four(+) players; playing time 30 minutes to three(+) hours. Published 1980.

SHOOTING STARS is a tactical game of space fighter combat. Except for firing weapons, all 16 game turn phases are plotted on a simulated "control console" before any movement takes place. The advanced game is basically the same but introduces a more complex console which includes energy factors, cloaking devices, tactical scanners, shields, and more.

SHOOTING STARS is a good game. The rules are quite clear and obviously well playtested. The advanced rules add complexity without slowing the game down or making it difficult to understand. If you want increased realism at the expense of playability, there are optional rules for different weapon types, hidden movement, and three dimensions.

Though there are minor flaws, the rules are very clean by comparison to earlier Yaquinto games. A couple of the scenarios are missing some information and the advanced CRT is missing one line in its legend. These flaws are easily remedied. The only fuzzy point in the rules is the number of directional changes allowed per turn. The basic rules imply that up to 9 each of left and right turns may be made while the advanced rules state that 9 is the total permitted. The biggest problem with this game is high cost and mediocre component quality. It just doesn't measure up to other Yaquinto games. At $7.00 the album series games have better components than SHOOTING STARS does at $16.00. The Milky Way background on the paper board may be aesthetically pleasing, but it makes reading some of the hexes impossible. Many of the playing pieces must be cut out of cardstock with scissors. Also, there are not enough advanced control consoles for some scenarios.

As I said before, SHOOTING STARS is a good game. If the price was in the $8.00 to $12.00 range, I would highly recommend it. As it stands, the buyer must decide if s/he wishes to pay for rules at the expense of component quality.

Gregory Courter

TIMELAG (Gameshop, Inc.); $3.95. Designed by Mike Vitale. Includes 4-page rulebook, 9" x 14" map, 120 die-cut counters, 2 "out of tech" tracks, bagged. 2 players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1980.

TIMELAG is a strategic science fiction game with each player representing a civilization at war with the other, for no apparent reason. What makes TIMELAG different is that relativity has an effect on the play. Warships cannot go faster than the speed of light, but can approach it, causing a time dilation. Movement is via hexes or warp jumps, with the latter occasionally resulting in "scatter." Each hex move or jump takes 5 years in relation to the home star and also means the ship is another 5 years behind in current technology. When opposing forces meet in combat, neither side will know how technically advanced (or behind) his opponent is in relation to his force. Combat factors are calculated by multiplying the ship's combat value by the technical level and subtract-

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ing its age. Ships can become somewhat stronger by "retooling," but in general, the higher the tech level, the greater the combat factor. Higher tech levels also have a movement advantage. A player wins by capturing his opponent's home system or by controlling 12 other systems.

TIMELAG is a good strategic game of the "microgame" type. It is based on the award winning novel *Forever War* by Joe Haldeman. It is simple and easy to learn but has enough strategic possibilities to warrant many plays.

TIMELAG does have a few minor problems. The map has a B system and a Beta system that is also abbreviated as B. Economic points are determined by die roll, so that a few lucky die rolls could have a disproportionate influence on the game. The tech levels only go up to seven. The rules could also be organized a little better.

I would recommend TIMELAG to those who like micro-type games.

–Robert Destro

VALLEY OF THE FOUR WINDS (Games Workshop); $20. Designed by Lewis Pulsipher. Boxed, with 16-page rulebook, 16" x 22" board mounted in two pieces, 140 thin, die-cut counters, 2 dice, and a 20-page, eponymous short story. Two players; playing time 3 hours. Published 1980.

Farrondil, an island of good awash in a sea of evil, is beset by undead to the east, swamplords to the southeast, the forest orcs to the west, and the dragon and phterrorgulls (sigh) to the north. Fortunately, the Gondemar dog-men, in the southern Greengorm Forest, are friendly. The forces of good must hold evil at bay, occupying the orc replacement center while simultaneously eliminating all skeleton troops from the board. Evil's objective is to take and hold the city of Farrondil for two turns.

I enjoyed the game, The play balance is good. To quote from the game booklet, "There are numerous strategies open to both players, but it is not easy to discern which is best as the strategies must be adjusted according to the variables built into the game."

The game has a lot of chrome, mostly in accord with the various twists and turns of the story on which it is based (originally published in *White Dwarf*). An attempt was made to index the exceptional rules involving special pieces. I very much appreciate it, even though the index didn't catch them all. The graphics are colorful, pleasing, and very clear; the board is well done.

My objections are, on the whole, minor. Given the many special counters, frequent reference to the rules is required until you can memorize them. You must follow somewhat arbitrary steps to accomplish some major goals. (This follows, again, from the specific twists of the story.) Finally, too much of a relatively small board is off-limits to too many units.

VALLEY OF THE FOUR WINDS suffers from being a British import; it is probably worth $16.50 (the price in England), but the cost rises to $20 in the U.S. If you enjoyed the short story, by all means buy the game.

–David Ladyman

SUPPLEMENTS

THE KEEP ON THE BORDERLANDS (TSR); $5.00. Designed by Gary Gygax. Supplement to D&D. 28-page 8½" x 11" booklet with 17" x 11" map/cover. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1980.

This module is for both beginning DMs and players, though experienced players with low level characters can fit in. There are 11 pages of information for the DM. This includes first-level spells, how to make a floorplan, tips on DMing, and more. The module is interesting and full of excitement. The players are obviously expected to center their play around the keep, a large fortress. There are lots of monsters in and around the keep; bugbears, orcs, kobolds, lizard men, and worse. For real playability, the players should take more than one venture into the . . . well, I'm not supposed to tell you about that.

The problems are few, and unimportant. The map is done rather sloppily, with forest, contour lines, roads, etc. all superimposed over the lower levels. Also the Caves of Chaos are in the book rather than on the map itself.

But on the whole, I enjoyed this module and I recommend it.

–Kirby T. Griffis

STAR FLEET BATTLES EXPANSION KIT NO. 1 (TFG); $4.95. Designed by Steven V. Cole. Supplement to the boxed edition of *Star Fleet Battles*. Contains a 5½" x 8½" rules booklet, 54 die-cut counters, data sheets, bagged. Two or more players; playing time ½-4 hours. Published 1980.

SFB is a space tactical game based on *Star Trek*, where you control, in some detail, the operation of one or more starships. The kit has many errata and rules clarifications based on the boxed set. Also included are 30 new ship types with two new races (Hydrans and Andromedans) and six new kinds of weapons. Eight scenarios and two mini-campaign games integrate the new features into the game. Cruisers based on "that movie" are featured.

The errata and clarifications section clears up quite a few problems from the boxed edition of SFB. Some of the new ships are very nasty (the Romulans now have a dreadnought) yet play balance is still maintained. All of the new scenarios now come with decent tactical hints.

My only complaint was that the kit's publication was delayed several months after it was first advertised.

If you play SFB, I highly recommend this expansion kit, if only for the errata.

–Earl S. Cooley III

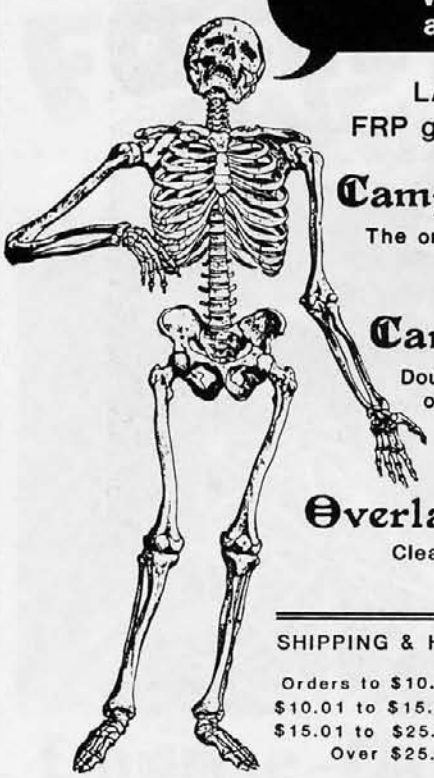
WHITE PLUME MOUNTAIN (TSR); $5.00. Designed by Lawrence Schick. Supplement to AD&D. 12-page 8½" x 11" booklet with 17" x 11" map/cover. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1979.

This module is essentially for fifth to tenth level characters. The background is interesting: Keraptis, a supposedly long-dead magician, has stolen three powerful magical weapons from three prominent dealers. You, as the player, have been hired to get them back. All you have to help you is a cryptic poem . . .

I greatly enjoyed both playing and DMing this module. It is different from most in its neatness of organization. It is a more believable module than most. One can encounter manticores, sea lions, crayfish, giant crabs, vampires, and many traps. I shudder to think of being a character in this dungeon. It is risky, but fun. It tests playing skill very well. Survivors should gain a level and some treasure.

This is on the whole a very good module. There are no real flaws. One might note its shortness – (12 pages!) – but this is no problem. Much is fitted into these few pages of text. I recommend it.

–Kirby T. Griffis



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COMPUTER GAMES

ANTS (Synergistic Solar, Inc., P.O. Box 560595, Miami, Fla. 33156.); $14.95. Cassette for the TRS-80 Level II Model I. Six speed levels and three different playing fields. One or two players; playing time 10 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1980.

One queen presides over the top of the board while her opponent queen rests at the bottom. Every turn each queen gets to produce one kind of offspring in variable numbers. The offspring may be guards, weaker but more numerous soldiers, weaker still workers, and lastly, the "all offense" drones. The offspring fight it out in the center of the screen as the speaker emits a series of pips and pops. The first person to fatally wound his opponent's queen or overrun his enemy's nest wins.

The game is very easy to learn and there are a large number of grand tactical options available. It takes a long time to learn what is best to produce when, and the game moves along briskly.

The problems I see are mostly a matter of taste. You have NO tactical control whatsoever. Your best laid plans can go astray as the guards you throw out screen the wrong side. Further, the game does seem susceptible to optimization.

Overall, I'd say this is a super game for kids but the serious gamer had best look elsewhere.

–J. Mishcon

ATLANTIC BALLOON CROSSING (The Software Exchange); $9.95 cassette, $14.95 disk. 16K program for the TRS-80. 1-3 players; playing time 30-120 minutes. Published 1979.

This game places each player in control of a gas balloon in an effort to cross the Atlantic Ocean from Canada to Paris. If the player can survive the crossing without going down in the ocean, he has achieved a minor victory. The real goal is not only to get across in the shortest possible time, but also to land as close as possible to Paris. It's not as easy as it sounds. As pilot of the balloon, the player is given 140,000 to 160,000 cubic feet of gas and about 7,000 pounds of ballast which he can release to control the rise and fall of the balloon. The balloon pilot also has a radio, which only functions at certain times, to get reports on the weather and the balloon's position. It is not possible to cross in a straight line. The pilot must make the balloon "ride" a high pressure system across the North Atlantic so the balloon must make an arc across the map. The direction in which the balloon travels is solely controlled by the wind, the direction of which varies with altitude. Also, the balloon will rise and fall in the course of the day because the sun causes the gas volume to go up.

The game has very attractive graphics. The map appears almost instantly in spite of the many poke commands used, and the other display shows the player's balloon as it crosses the ocean and has readings of all significant instruments such as barometer and thermometer. The game also provides each player with a great challenge. The pilot of a balloon must anticipate weather and wind conditions and constantly make decisions about how to adjust for them, if at all.

I feel that this game is well worth the money. It provides a challenging multi-player or solitaire game which is difficult to optimize.

–Joseph Suchar

META-TREK (The Alternate Source, 1806 Ada, Lansing, MI 48910); $19.95. Disk by Brandon Rigney III for the TRS-80 Level II Model I. One player; playing time 3-5 hours. Can be saved. Published 1980.

This is the latest and perhaps the best of the original "Trek" programs. By original I mean no sound and not real time. The mission is to explore 256 quadrants, claim as many of them as possible, while destroying as many Binarians (read Klingons) as possible. Your vessel is given the usual assortment of sensors, disruptor bolts (i.e., torpedoes), xenon lasers, and computer aids. Your support and succor is derived from a series of star bases that can repair and resupply you.

Why do I say perhaps the best of the originals? Perhaps because this program takes all of the nice ideas that have appeared over the years and combines them into a sensible game format. I particularly like the economic restraints, the multi-shot laser that can miss, the time warps you can create and then fly through (at your peril), the wonderful evaluation at the game's end. The clever "inflation reports" alter the economic picture in an ever-changing way. The computer plays a valuable role and I much appreciate being able to save a long game like this.

Still, I feel there are weak spots that could well be corrected. The bolts only go out on multiples of 45 degrees. The flight paths are somewhat constrained in terms of choosing angle paths. The chance of being destroyed during the course of the game is quite good (which is fine) but that always seems to generate a zero rating.

All in all, I would say that for those interested in a first rate original-Trek-style game, this fits the bill nicely.

–J. Mishcon

ROUND THE HORN (The Software Exchange); $9.95. 16K cassette for the TRS-80. 1-3 players; playing time one hour. Published 1979.

In this game each player becomes the pilot of a clipper ship in the late 19th century. His instructions are to sail his vessel from New York City, around the tip of South America, and north to San Francisco in the shortest possible time. As pilot of the ship, the player is given control of the rudder and instruments which provide information about position, heading, and windspeed. The players rotate in seven day turns. During his turn, a player sees on the screen what a captain of a real ship

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would see, including a view of the position of the sails, the bow of the ship and the ocean beyond, and all of the instrument readings. Navigating the ship is not simply a matter of pointing the ship in the right direction and watching the ocean. The player must often deal with strong headwinds, deceptive currents, and even icebergs.

The graphic displays are very well done. Both the map and the view of the ship are attractive and functional. The game is also very challenging. Simply surviving the voyage around Cape Horn is difficult. But the real challenge is to do it in as little time as possible.

One note that should be made is that although the internal map of the western hemisphere is accurate to within one or two degrees latitude or longitude, the map which appears on the screen is not. Therefore, it is a good idea to have a good globe or world map on hand while playing this game.

ROUND THE HORN is a challenging game which is in between all of those economic games and the simplistic arcade games. I highly recommend it.

–Joseph Suchar

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TRAJAN'S TREACHEROUS TRAP (FBI); $5.00 set up, $2.00 per turn. Designed by Rick Loomis. Play-by-mail FRPG. Started 1979.

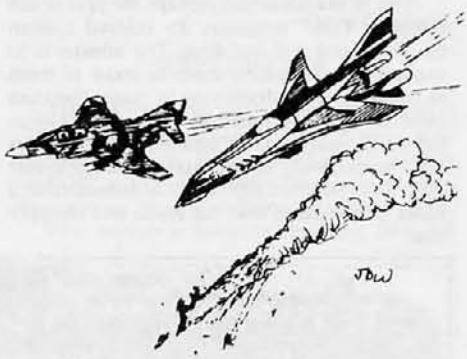
TTT is a simple play-by-mail game patterned after the Flying Buffalo's solitaire dungeons. The player guides a single character around a very dangerous dungeon in search of an exit. Each turn, a single-letter option is written down on a pre-paid card and sent in. Results come back in about two weeks.

There isn't much good to say about this one. Each turn represents the turn of a page in a solo dungeon. The only real difference between this game and a solo is the "none of the above" option, which lets you write in your own option. This costs an extra $3.00, and doesn't always work.

Oh, yes, there's a prize. Everyone who gets out wins an unspecified prize. The first one out wins a grand prize, a lifetime solo dungeon, *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, or *Starweb* subscription.

I can't really recommend TRAJAN'S TREACHEROUS TRAP, unless you're rich, can't find anyone to game with, and find that no one will sell you any of the numerous solo dungeons available.

–Stefan Jones



HISTORICAL GAMES

AIRWAR '80 (SPI); $19.00. Designed by David C. Isby. This is the updated version of *Airwar*, including new planes and some new rules. Comes with 64 pages of rules, 72 pages of charts and tables, 8 geomorphic map sections, 16 "aircraft control displays," 700 counters, and 2 dice. Two players; playing time 2 hours to all day. Published 1980.

This is a truly monster game dealing with air combat in the modern world. Players control from 2 to 6 jet aircraft. The aircraft control display shows the status of the jet, speed, altitude, missiles remaining, etc. Each turn these are adjusted by the player as the aircraft is maneuvered.

Impressive. The aircraft available to the players range from MiG-15's to B-1 bombers. Each aircraft type has its own capabilities, special characteristics, etc. Missiles and cannon are similarly treated.

However, the very mass of data needed to play slows the game down badly. Playing out a 1-minute dogfight can easily take 2 hours. Turns average around 15 minutes each. Scenarios with more than 6 or 8 aircraft are unwieldy. And searching the rules for the one case you're looking for is murder. Luckily, the rules are arranged so that they can be absorbed in several large chunks.

As a simulation, AIRWAR '80 is of high quality. If you have the cash and the interest in jet combat, you might buy it. Anybody else should skip this one.

–Craig Barber

ARMOR AT KURSK: THE BATTLE OF PROCHOROVKA (formerly *Prochorovka: Armor at Kursk*) (TFG); $3.95. Designed by Steve Cole. Ziplock, with one 16-page 5½" x 8½" rulebook, 108 die-cut counters, one 16½" x 21½" map, and one CRT/unit setup card. Two players; playing time one to two hours. Published 1979.

One of the best-kept secrets in WWII was the battle of Kursk. It was only in the early 70s that Kursk, not Stalingrad, was recognized as the real turning point of the war in Russia. Stalingrad determined that the Germans would not win; Kursk determined that they would *lose*. Cole's design pits the SS Panzer Corps against the 5th Guards Tank Army at Prochorovka, the largest tank battle of WWII. It's vintage *ostfront* combat at the battalion/brigade level. No ZOC, no stacking – just move-fight, move-fight. The Germans are trying to get to the far side of the map, and the Soviets are trying to stop them. The emphasis is on action and playability, and Cole has given us a respectable alternative to the headaches of voluminous legalistic rules and elaborate play sequencing.

The terrain features split the map into three lanes. The Germans are pretty well stuck in their lane, but the Russian can switch arriving reinforcements from lane to lane. The chrome is minimal: special artillery rules and some abstracted air support. The simplified system and the differential CRT keep the turns moving at a good clip.

Irritants include a distorted game scale, i.e., battalions with 400 m/hex. That would be quite a fit – and in combat formation, no less. The terrain differentation is poor in relation to the scale. We get forests, towns, two small hills, and roads. The railroad embankment and the River Psei make the lanes. But Cole says he was working for playability, and no doubt additional terrain types would have involved some "dirt."

SPI started this foolishness of re-titling with *Bulge/The big Red One*. Goodness knows why a nice respectable company like TFG would want to follow suit. Anyhow, ignore the name nonsense, appreciate the reasonable price, and save KURSK/PROCHOROVKA for the rainy Sunday afternoon when the thought of one more cycle of *War in the Pacific* turns your stomach.

–Nick Schuessler

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PUBLICATIONS

FANTASY MODELING (Fantasy Modeling, Inc., 475 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10016); $8.99/year (4 issues). Editor Phillip O. Stearns. 54-page 8½" x 11" magazine. First issue 1980.

FANTASY MODELING is a new, slick paper magazine concerned with wargames, RPGs, miniatures, and science fiction plastic models. A large field, to say the least. But the first issue holds very little for anyone with any experience in these fields. The articles, with a couple of exceptions, are all of the "beginners' introduction" type.

The magazine is filled with beautiful color and black and white photographs, some wrongly captioned. The articles are either too general (the whole spectrum of wargames) or too specific (a particular set of "Historex" parts). When discussing miniatures the magazine seems pre-occupied with the 54mm-75mm and even 90mm ranges, with only a few examples in the 25mm scale.

The first issue of FANTASY MODELING seems to be a last minute job, with typos throughout and even whole columns interposed. At a cover price of $2.50, the first issue is worth buying only for the pictures, or as an introduction to the hobby. Hopefully, later issues of this magazine will show improvement, otherwise this magazine will be one to be avoided.

–Iain Delaney

GAMESMASTER CATALOG (Boynton & Assoc., Clifton House, Clifton, VA 22024); $9.95, 8½" x 11" 202-page book; many color photos. Published 1980.

This is the first comprehensive guide to games in print. It lists a good proportion of the games presently available; sections include FRP Games and Adventures, Fantasy & Mythology, Science Fiction and Science Fantasy, Historical and Contemporary, Miniatures & Miniatures Rules, Accessories, Computer & Video, PBM Games, and several others. There are also indexes of publishers and games.

The CATALOG is a great deal of fun to browse through . . . every bit as good as being turned loose in a well-stocked game store. In particular, it's a great opportunity to find out what some of the newer companies are offering. Most of the ads are illustrated; many of the illustrations are color photos.

Caveat: All those beautiful photos and product descriptions are actually *ads*, written and paid for by the manufacturers . . . and, like any other ads, they must be taken with a grain of salt. The CATALOG doesn't *review* games, it advertises them. Expect the listings to play up games' strong points and ignore the weak ones. Also, publishers who didn't buy advertising will not be found in the illustrated section (though many are in the indexes).

On the whole, though, the GAMESMASTER CATALOG is a good buy for the serious game collector – and a *must* for a game club or store. I'm looking forward to next year's edition.

–Steve Jackson

RICHARD BERG'S REVIEW OF GAMES (SPI); edited by Richard Berg. $1 per issue from SPI, or $25 for one year (25 issues). Four 8½" x 11" pages per issue. First published 1980.

BERG'S REVIEW, or RBROG, is a new kind of hobby publication: a short, frequent, professionally produced fanzine dedicated (almost) solely to reviews. Its editor is an SPI old-timer, and certainly qualified to take on the project. A typical issue contains three game reviews (shorter than feature length, but longer than capsules), an editorial, and *Grapes*, a "gossip column."

Predictably, the reviews are the best part of the zine. Most of them have seemed clear and fairly objective (though some needed editing for length and style). The cross-section of companies and subjects is as good as could be expected at a rate of six games per month, and no SPI-favoritism is evident. Most reviews so far have been of fairly recent games – another plus. There is no advertising; this may be a plus or a minus, depending on your tastes.

But, on the whole, I'm not sure RBROG is worth the money. No matter how you slice it, it ends up costing about as much per year, and *three or four times* as much per page, as an ordinary magazine. The hard-to-read computer type doesn't really seem to save much space. And a good chunk of each issue is taken up by the gossip column, which tries gamely to live down to the "standard" set by *Different Worlds'* "Letter from Gigi." Is there a place for this kind of stuff in wargaming? Maybe, but not at these prices.

This is a good effort. I just can't pick it up without thinking "Where's the rest of the magazine?" Recommendation: Subscribe to *S&T*, *F&M*, *Dragon*, and *TSG* first. If you still have time and money, by all means get this.

–Steve Jackson

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Letters

Ordinarily, I accept the advice Oscar Wilde gave Lily Langrty when she set out upon the stage: "In your career, you will receive many reviews. Reply to none of them."

Since I am writing this in response to Mr. Kearns' review of *B-1 Bomber,* which is not my game, I might not be violating this principle – but then again I might, since the comment which offends my sensibilities could easily apply to my own *Squadron Leader* computer games. Our games, like those from Avalon Hill, will load interchangeably on TRS-80, Apple, and PET computers. We consider this to be a significant accomplishment – but Mr. Kearns' reaction is totally negative: "Two thirds of what you bought is wasted," he writes, implying that the games cost three times what they should. This is a pretty serious charge – and I wish to plead "not guilty."

The only thing that would be different on the single machine version would be the tape cassette with the program on it. This now contains ten minutes of magnetic tape. With a one-machine version for the Apple we could use only four minutes – and the cost would be about *double* what it is now.

Why? Well, when was the last time you bought a four-minute tape? That's right, they don't *make* four minute tapes! Of course, they *can* make four-minute tapes if you *want* them – but you have to pay extra. As long as you use less than the smallest, off-the-shelf, made-by-the-millions size, you don't pay more for longer tapes. The people who mass-produce our tapes charge us a fixed set-up cost for each game plus so much per cassette recorded thereafter. At present, given that we don't have enough money for huge production runs, the set-up cost on a 1000 game run is 40% of the total. Obviously, if we could make bigger runs, the unit cost would come down – by 20% on a 2000 game run, 30% on a 4000 game run, and so on. This is why Avalon Hill games cost $15.00 and ours cost $20.00. The same mathematics would take effect if we made separate versions for each system: given a fixed amount of money to spend, we would have to pay *three* set-up costs where we now pay one. This would increase our production costs by 80%!

Thus, far from "two thirds of what you pay for" being "wasted" it would seem that up to half of what you get is free!

David A. Wesley
Discovery Games

Points well taken! But note Bruce Webster's column in issue 36 . . .

–SJ

The Iranian hostages have just been freed as I write, and now I can say that I did have my doubts about the good taste of your game *Raid on Iran.* Certainly I could (and can) see its high quality as a game design, but I was afraid that an unfavorable resolution to this crisis would reflect badly on you and on wargames in general (as well as spoiling the game permanently for me).

But now they're free and apparently unharmed, and such questions of taste are moot. Now we can examine the game and see it for what it is: a clean, plausible, playable simulation of which any designer could be proud.

Allen Varney
Reno, NV

I am happy to report that I have just completed a new sourcebook for EPT. This came to over 500 pages, double spaced, and it contains not a single rule or game device! It is just an exposition of the world of Tekumel, its peoples, cultures, etc. I did not describe the whole planet – this would have taken many volumes – but I did give details in all of the cultures of the great northern continent on which the old EPT centered. Tsolyanu is still the hub of affairs, but I have now added materials for the other four great Empires (Yan Kor, Salarvya, Mu'ugalavya, and Livyanu), plus considerable information on some of the smaller societies, the tribes, etc. I have completed an additional two big terrain maps, which lead off eastwards through Salarvya and Rannalu past the Plains of Glass to the far eastern ocean. All of these items have been sent off to Lou Zocchi, who seems willing to consider publishing it. There is no deadline as yet; Lou apparently wishes to consolidate his business with his new partners and get his cash flow straightened out before rushing into an expensive publication.

I'm hard at work on the actual rewrite of the rules. I have a draft all done, but I scrapped in favour of writing a separate sourcebook (which can be used for the old EPT as well as for the rewrite); then the actual rules themselves can be devoted to the niceties of game mechanics – precisely as though someone wrote a book on the warfare and societies of the Napoleonic period in order to get all of the background out of the way before writing a set of Napoleonics miniatures rules. I expect to have the rules completed by spring. I do not know when Lou will have the sourcebook ready – or the rules – but I hope it will be this summer sometime.

Prof. M.A.R. Barker
Minneapolis, Minn.

I write this letter as an errata to my "More Psionics for Traveller" article that appeared in issue 35 of *The Space Gamer.* To perform the awareness ability of Full Body Functions Control requires an experience level of thirteen and the expenditure of thirteen psionic strength points; the ability of Full Inner Strength Potential is an ability requiring an experience level of fourteen and the expediture of fourteen psionic strength points. Also, the article may be considered an extension of that which appeared in TSG 20. The separate psionic talents may be added or discarded at will.

Kenneth William Burke
Hartford, CT

After the article on campaign *WarpWar* appeared, I organized a game at the place where I work (a chemical plant) with six players and a neutral ship commander. About a month later one of the players organized another game due to the interest generated. Another game has been organized recently. There are about 20 people at the plant involved in playing the game since some are playing as teams. All but 4 of these people had never played a simulation game before. This new interest has greatly increased the number of people I have to "battle" with. I intend to have a similar game using *Stellar Conquest* rules after this game is completed. Keep up the good work.

Tom Kenesson
Bay City, TX

My "thing" in painting is Napoleonics, so my approach to painting miniatures may be considerably different from Mr. Boldrick's. I agree with most of what he says, where I have experiences in painting in those areas, but I've found that a spray sealer, normally used in ceramics painting, works better and faster than painting on a gloss, flat, or semi-gloss finish. The stuff comes in aerosol cans for about $2.00, in gloss and clear matte, which just about covers (no pun) the range I need for 15mm armies. Also, the spray does away with oxidation/corrosion problems both in the paints and metal. I have some 15mm Mini-Figs I painted 5 years ago that haven't lost any of the color values or gathered "rust" on the metallic paints/exposed metal areas, and I suspect that it's the spray sealer that did it. My old 25mm Napoleonics have suffered from exposure, and were not protected with the spray. The article that I read in TSG 34 was well written and informative, but I have tried doing eyes on 15mm's and it's a total waste of time, at least for army formations.

Lloyd W. Willis
Manchaca, TX

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I enjoyed the gentle lampooning of the rules style for *DragonQuest*, especially so because it appeared in a highly favorable review. Forrest Johnson captured the strengths and weaknesses of the game with admirable brevity, balancing the hazards of the committee approach with the many (blush!) innovative ideas. I must dispute his conclusion that DQ can give TSR a run for the money: *Dungeons & Dragons* is too firmly entrenched to hurt from any challenge less that a heavy media blitz. What with increasing coverage of the D&D "phenomenon," the game has become synonymous with fantasy role-playing the way Kleenex is with facial tissue.

Mr. Johnson seems confused as to who was involved in the design of DQ. While Messrs. Simonsen, Ryer, and Hessel did contribute to the final product, their efforts were not in game design or development. Briefly, I designed the full prototype, and then Dave Ritchie and Ted Woods each took large chunks of the game and worked them over to their satisfaction (and not necessarily mine). When I ceased to work for SPI, I turned over further design in the system to Dave Ritchie.

I noticed an abrupt end to *The Space Gamer*'s non-affiliation with any game company. The credibility of the magazine, which was suspect when reviewing a Steve Jackson game, is now also in doubt when reviewing a Steve Jackson Game (is all this clear?). It is unlikely that articles on either will be taken seriously until the first "pan" of a Jackson effort is printed. Even then, there are some nasty minds which will point to his editorial position whenever the faintest hint of praise is found about one of his games. And there should be many, given Steve's track record.

The concept of reviewing any and all publications in the adventure game field (plus computer programs) is a good one, but it needs leavening influence. I have no sense of whether a "good" game in the eyes of Elisabeth Barrington is the same as a Tony Watson's good game. As *The Space Gamer* audience becomes familiar with the new editorial format, the reviewer identity crisis will pass (people will expect a certain standard from Watson *et al*). However, this does not solve the comparison problem. Perhaps each reviewer should rate their subjects from 1 to 9, or from 1 to 5 stars, or any other similar method, at the conclusion of their comments.

Eric Goldberg
New York, NY

Not sure a star-spangled Space Gamer *would be any more uniform than the present model. (But maybe I should assign 1 to 5 stars to each* reviewer. *Whadya think?)*

–FJ

Reader Ads

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INTERPLANETARY EMPIRES PBM game starting soon. For information, send SASE to Robert Kaufman c/o University School, 2785 SOM, Cleveland, OH 44022.

TSG BACK ISSUES

Did you miss an article you wanted to read? Some back issues of TSG are still available:

No. 15. Wizard and Olympica designer intros; Robotics in Traveller; Floating Hulks; Ogre Update; Orcs and their Weapons; computer gaming.

No. 16. WarpWar article; Classics Simulated in Melee; Alpha Omega; Demons! (Moties in Melee); 1977 game survey results – and a LOT of reviews.

No. 17. GEV designer's intro; strategy for Chitin: I; variants for Imperium, Melee, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant; WarpWar fiction.

No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

No. 19. POND WAR; variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and WarpWar; Battlefleet Mars variant; reviews of Swords & Sorcery, Runequest, and Raumkrieg; MicroGame design article.

No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming frauds).

No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a MicroGame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules, putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre"; variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios. Also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; tactics in GEV; variations on Wizard; computers in wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

No. 27. Hot Spot's designer's intro; Time Travel; Nuke the Air Eaters (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TFT; Muskets in TFT; Game Design Part 1; 5 pages of game reviews.

No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results; Overmen in TFT; A Guide to SF/Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Games report; Writers' and Artists' guides; 7 pages of reviews; Game Design Part 2; Deus Ex Machina.

No. 29. Fantasy Trip designer's intro; Painting Fantasy Miniatures; Fantasy and SF game magazines surveyed; Game Design Part 3; more Deus Ex Machina; 7 pages of reviews.

No. 30. KUNG FU 2100; Painting Fantasy Miniatures Part II; Index to Game Articles; Game Design Part 4; Programmable Calculators; 10 pages of reviews.

No. 31. "Sam Beowulf"; 1980 Game Software survey; Game Design Part 5; Random Maze Generation; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 32. Traveller issue . . . Alternate Character Types, reviews of play aids, scenarios, and variants; also Game Design Part 6; Deus Ex Machina; "Minus Two Reaction;" software survey update; Yaquinto Games report; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 33. Play-by-mail issue . . . Feature reviews of four PBM games, a Warp War Campaign, Survey of PBM companies; also, Contest Report; Company Report from Schubel and Son; "End Game;" GEV scenario; Game Design Part 7; Deus Ex Machina; The Good Guys, Part I; and 10 pages of reviews.

No. 34. Miniatures issue . . . Cardboard Heroes Designer's Notes, LOTR Miniatures, Painting Fantasy Minatures Advanced Techniques, Survey of miniatures manufacturers; also "The Challenge;" Artifact Designer's Notes and Expansion Rules; 3-D Displays II; Game Design Part 8; Wish Contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 35. The 1980 Game Survey; Solitaire Ogre; Notes for Novice DMs; The War of the Worlds featured; Insane Variants on Stomp!; Character Contest results; More Psionics for Traveller; Game Design Part IX; Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 36. Computing damage in Star Fleet Battles: "The Pawn of the Fire Web;" a Featured Review of Akalabeth; Company Report from Eon Products; The Ten Deadly Sins of Computer Programming; Game Design: Combat Systems; Computer Graphics contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

Send $2.00 per copy, plus 50 cents per order for postage and handling, to TSG, Box 18805, Austin, TX 78760.

If you are a TSG subscriber, you can get discounts on back issues. Use the order form on the mailer cover of your subscription copy.

News & Plugs

Strategic Simulations has released its first space game, *The Warp Factor.* Price: $39.95.

Contrary to what we printed in our last issue, the final balloting for Origins awards will be by members of the new Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design, composed of "individuals who have made a contribution to the products and/or general advancement of the hobby." For further details, send an SASE to: Awards Academy, P.O. Box 787, Troy, MI 48099.

News from FBI: To amend our somewhat erroneous report in TSG 36, Michael Stackpole has not left FBI, but has taken a leave of absence. Also, *Sorcerer's Apprentice* 9 and 10 will be combined into a double issue.

S.R. Jones & Co. offers a 5-inch high, 8-inch long bronze dragon statue. Price: $750.00. The edition is limited to 1,000 numbered figures.

Synergistic Solar has announced the release of *Space Ace 21,* a 16K cassette for the TRS-80 Model I or III. Players design their own fighters and maneuver in combat. Price: $19.95.

R.A. Franz (1010 Woodstock No. 54, Winchester, VA 22601) offers *Wargame Commentaries.* Price: $11/year (7 issues), single copy $1.75.

Reilly Associates has produced a "Planetary Geodesic Survey Map" for *Traveller.* Price: $1.75 for a pad of 50. Also available: dungeon traps, town plans, and more *Traveller* records. Contact them at P.O. Box 8144, Rochester, NY 14617.

Alan L. Abramsky is compiling *The Complete Guide to Painting Military Miniatures.* Miniatures enthusiasts should write him for a questionnaire at No. 5 Muirfield Court, Roanoke, TX 76262.

For those who like Lawrence Watt-Evans' work – another novel, *The Seven Altars of Dusarra* will be published by Del Rey this summer.

SPI has released a science fiction game, *The Sword and the Stars,* based on *Empires of the Middle Ages.* Price: $9.95.

The redoubtable artist Paul Jaquays is now working as a game design consultant for COLECO, the electronic game company.

GDW has released a revised edition of *Triplanetary.* Price: $11.98.

The Good Guys by JD

ULP!...PRINCESS!
HUNK! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE IN THE SHUTTLE BAY! I ESCAPED BUT...
!!!
WELL, UH... THEY, ER... I... UH...
AND ISN'T THAT A DENOVIAN SEX DROID?... HUNK...YOU DIDN'T!...
WELL...I
AND WHAT'S IN THAT BRIEF CASE YOU'VE GOT?
WELL, UH... WOULD YOU BELIEVE A MILLION CREDITS... I UH SOLD OUT THE REBELS...
YOU WHAT! OH MY GOD!
!!!
HEY! YOU'RE A HERO! LOOK INSIDE !!!...
MEANWHILE! BACK TO THE BIG HAIRY THING...(SMELLY)
OKAY MEN, HE'S IN THERE!...
GET HIM!
ACK!
THAT'S IT MEN! BLAST THE SNOT OUTA THAT APE!
POW!
AK!
WHUM!
ZOT!
TAK!
EYARG
PAK
WELL MEN.., DID YOU... AVGH!... GAHK!!
!!
JDW
LORD NADER,... HERE ARE THE PLANS FOR THE NEW GIANT BATTLE STATION WE.... AH... WE... UH...OH...
FREEZE SUCKER!
I THINK I JUST MADE ... ADMIRAL
YOU IDIOT! SOMEONE'S SWITCHED BRIEFCASES!

Calendar

March 13-15: COASTCON. Royal D'Iberville. Contact Coastcon 81, P.O. Box 6025, Biloxi, MS 39532.

March 20-21: SIMCON III. Con for fantasy role-playing games. University of Rochester in Rochester, NY. Contact SimCon III, Box 5142, Rochester, NY 14627.

March 20-22: LUNACON '81. Films, art show, wargaming. Contact LunaCon '81, P.O. Box 204, Brooklyn, NY 11230.

March 27-29: NORWESCON 4, SF con. Contact NORWESCON 4, P.O. Box 24207, Seattle, WA 98124.

April 4-5: UNHSGC Spring Gaming Festival. Con featuring miniatures, board games, and RPG. Contact R. Bradford Chase, UNH Simulations Games Club, Memorial Union Building, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824.

April 9-12: COLLEGECON 2. F&SF con. Contact CollegeCon 2, c/o Larry Taylor, University of Houston, N-23 UC, Program Council, 4800 Calhoun, Houston, TX 77004.

April 25-26: MADCON III, con for all kinds of gaming, University of Wisconsin Union South. Contact Pegasus Games, 222 W. Gorham, Madison, WI 53703.

May 1-3 (note date change): USACON 3. Gaming con for SF&F, RP, and boardgaming at University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL. Contact Leo Vaulin, 5856 Lisloy Dr., Mobile, AL 36608.

May 22-25: GRIMCON III. F/SF gaming con, Oakland Hyatt House, 455 Hegenberger Road, Oakland, CA 94612. Contact P.O. Box 4153, Berkeley, CA 94704.

June 5-7: PHRINGECON 2, SF fan con, including T&T tournament. Contact PhringeCon, Inc., P.O. Box 128, Tempe, AZ 85281.

July 3-5: ORIGINS '81: To be held in Dunfee Motel, San Mateo, CA. Contact Origins '81, P.O. Box 5833, San Jose, CA 95150.

July 17-19: ODYSSEY '81. Con featuring all kinds of gaming. Sponsored by the UNH Simulations Games Club; for information contact R. Bradford Chase, UNHSGC, Memorial Union Building, Durham, NH 03824.

July 24-26: ATLANTICON. New wargaming convention. Contact AtlantiCon, Inc., P.O. Box 15405, Baltimore, MD 21220.

August 13-16: GENCON XIV. FRPG and new gaming releases. Contact GenCon XIV, Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147; 414-248-8050.

September 3-7: DENVENTION TWO. SF con. Contact Denvention Two, P.O. Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211 or (303) 433-9774.

September 4-7: GLASC VI, simulation gaming con, including monster games. Contact GLASC Secretary, c/o L. Daniel, 20550 Wyandotte St., Canoga Park, CA 91306.

September 11-13: DRAGON FLIGHT, a FRP con, to be held in Seattle. Contact The Brass Dragon Society, P.O. Box 33872, Seattle, WA 98133.

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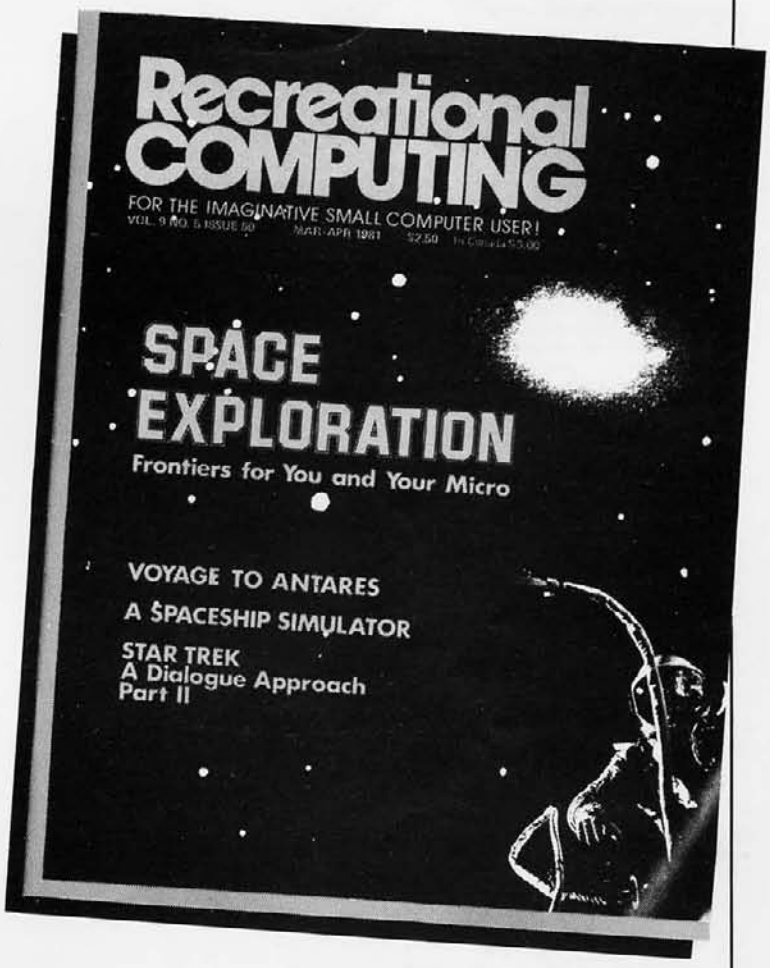

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EARTH EDITION

3rd Annual Canal Races Off To Slow Start...
story page C-10

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLE

Venusian Plots Erupt on Earth

VENUSIAN ATTEMPT MISFIRES

Government officials were alarmed today when the final report from MITE (Martian Investigative Team Earth), was released. The report confirms the long standing beliefs that the Venusian Empire was responsible for the so-called eruptions of an extinct volcano on the planet Earth. The eruptions in question occurred in the American sector known as Washington.

Although this eruption still has Earthling scientists bumfuzzled, the brains of MITE have solved the mystery The Venusians were once again attempting an attack on Mars and make it seem as though the Earthlings were to blame.

The report states,"Enough evidence has been uncovered to keep us busy for years just sifting through it." However, conclusive proof has already beem established. The report claims that after several years of secretive work, the Venusians and heartless-allies had built another sub-terranean VOLCANNON. Much to the dismay of their leaders, the engineering crews forgot to bore out the barrel of the big gun, causing severe damage to the gun crew, needless to say the cannon. It is beleived that some of the die-hard Venusians may have survived the firing and are preparing for a renewed attempt.

During the investigation it was learned that the belligerent Nrdns of Venus wished to break the ties being established by the Earthlings and the Martians. The plan was designed to make the Earthmen believe the explosion was just something natural, while we were supposed to think that Earth had launched an attack on us. This would then result in our retaliatory strike which would appear to the Earthlings as an unprovoked attack It is quite simple to see the rest, a war would ensue - Venus would offer to come to the aid of the Earthmen, who would accept, thus giving Venus a foothold with which to begin an invasion. This method of conquest seems to be their cup of zorp as it is identical to the method used in subjugation of the Mercurians.

Now that the report has been released, any further attempts by the Venusians will be dealt with accordingly as we and our Earthly - allies will know who to blame. For a copy of this report write;

"THE VOLCANNON"
C/O MITE
12158 CRDR TRI
HYDROGEN, RSOOM 78613

WEATHER

Local forcast:

	Phobos	Deimos
ZUNRIZE.....6z8		
ZUNZET.....19z31		
MOONUP.....6z59	16z4	10z2 22z12
MOONDOWN....11z30	22z17	16z23

Skies clear in early morning turning to clouds and mild winds. Amonia showers 40% in late aftermid.

TEMP.....High 63, Low -152
WINDS.....Norperly 120H
HUMIDITY....0.000978%

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"THEY'RE ONLY METAL"

REPORT CLAIMS...

CEDAR PARK (MP)-In a report released about the Martian Metals lines this month, a statement by the Martian envoy admitted that "they (the figures) do, at times, appear life-like, but maintained "They're Only Metal", despite the hundreds of claims to the contrary.

The controversy began last summer when a reviewer and a noted gaming personality disappeared in conjunction with a figure sent to be reviewed. At the time the disappearance seemed coincidental, but as the number of missing climbed, they became linked to the miniatures line. In response to industry wide questioning, Lester Schoonover, assistant envoy, called for an indepth study of the line.

"The overall conclusion is that Martian Metals miniatures are safe and only metal shaped into life-like forms, as shown by the photo," concluded the report. "While the line is assessed as inanimate, it is only wise not to form conclusions at the drop of a tentacle. Our studies in a laboratory environment show that they do at times appear life-like, and often seem to move but extensive visual evidence disproves the rumors that our line had anything to do with missing earthlings."

When asked as to who could be responsible for linking the miniatures line to the disappearances, Schoonover stated cryptically, "They know who they are and a few earthlings do not matter to them, but to us they do.

This figure, as shown by time lapse photography, is not moving, however it does have an uncanny life-like appearance. This particular figure can be found in a "World of Fantasy", BOX #9904 GIANT (TITAN) for only $4.95

Titanian Embassy Not Responsible

The earth based firm of Martian Metals was apparently the recipient of a threatening anti-Martian telegram allegedly submitted by the Titanian Embassy and bearing Emperor Thration-Al-Ren XXXVII signature. Fearing possible Venusian involvement, the Bigbob of Martian Metals wired the telegram to the headquarters of the Marine Local #304. Brigadier Phlurfl Mahonee responded by sending a detachment of I-suited Marines to Palatine, Illinois in the American Sector. It was here, under a pile of potato-peelings, beer cans, and fish heads a Venusian Retch Class Courier Ship was discovered.

When questioned as to the validity of his endorsement on the telegram, Emperor Thration-al-Ren was quoted as saying "I did not sign that telegram, futhermore, I would never have signed that telegram and anyway, who cares?" The emperors press secretary did indicate that the possibility did exist that the leftist organization "The Sons of Venus", could be responsible. "The Sons of Venus" you may well remember, were responsible for last years Save the Slimedogs rally, and that horrible Venusian propaganda booklet, "War of the Worlds".

For Info Write To: MARTIAN METALS
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CEDAR PARK, TX 78613

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MANEUVERS

Fig. 1: BEND (D3)

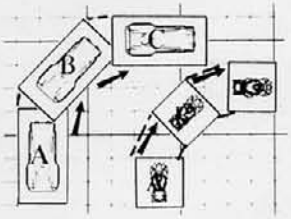

Fig. 2: TIGHT BEND (D6)

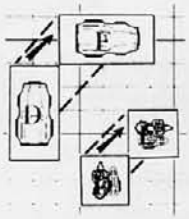

Fig. 3: DRIFT (D1)

Fig. 4: STEEP DRIFT (D3)

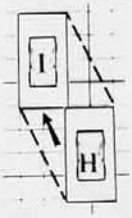

Fig. 5: SWERVE (D1)

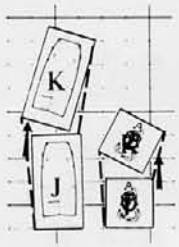

Fig. 6: HARD SWERVE (D3)

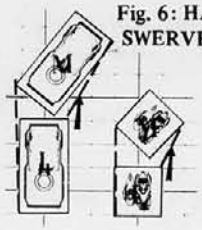

Fig. 7: BOOTLEGGER (D7)

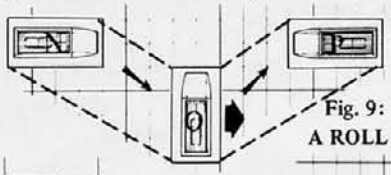

Fig. 8: SKIDDING ½" (crash result)

Fig. 9: BEGINNING A ROLL (crash result)

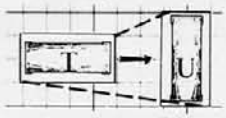

Fig. 10: EVENING-OUT (D0)

All maneuvers are described in Sec. 7 (pp. 7-8). Squares count as 'adjacent' if either their sides or their corners touch. If the corner of a counter is exactly on the line between two squares, the vehicle's owner may choose which square it occupies. Dotted lines show the vehicle's path. Note: Where no picture is shown for a cycle, the cycle's movement is the same as for the front half of a car performing that maneuver.

RAPID DECELERATION – DIFFICULTY FACTORS:

15 mph or less in one turn: no difficulty.
20 mph in one turn: D3.
25 mph in one turn: D5.
30 mph in one turn: D7, and each tire takes 1 die of damage.
More than 30 mph in one turn: Go directly to Crash Table 1, and take 2 dice of damage to each tire.

HAZARDS

Road hazards such as oil and ice take effect only if a vehicle tries a maneuver while part of the vehicle counter is in the area affected by the hazard. In that case, the hazard ADDS the indicated number to the difficulty of that maneuver. Example: A drift, normally D1, counts as D2 if attempted in gravel, and D3 if attempted in oil.

LIGHT RAIN or GRAVEL ON ROAD: add D1.
HEAVY RAIN or OIL ON ROAD: add D2.
ICE ON ROAD: add D4.

Collisions with small objects are also hazards. When a vehicle strikes any object, advance the handling marker and roll on the Control Table:

COLLIDING WITH (OR SIDESWIPING) ANY VEHICLE: D4.
HITTING CURB, OBSTACLE, OR PEDESTRIAN: D3.
HITTING LOOSE DEBRIS: D2.

Enemy action may also create a hazard:

ENEMY FIRE DOES 1-5 HITS DAMAGE: D1.
ENEMY FIRE DOES 6-9 HITS DAMAGE: D2.
ENEMY FIRE DOES 10 OR MORE HITS DAMAGE: D3.
DRIVER INJURED OR KILLED: an *extra* D2 hazard.

Note that each enemy attack produces a separate hazard. If a vehicle is struck by three weapons in one turn, each attack would move the handling-status marker down and require a separate die roll on the Control Table. Mines are 'enemy fire.' Spikes, debris, obstacles. etc., are not.

TIRE BLOWOUT: D2 if the tire was lost to spikes, debris, or skid damage. D3 if it was lost to enemy fire. In addition, a vehicle's handling *class* drops by 2 next turn if a tire blows out due to spikes, etc. If the last hit of damage is done by enemy fire, the entire *wheel* is considered lost, and handling drops by 3 next turn. See Sec. 12. In either case, the vehicle's handling marker goes to -6 immediately!

Exceptions: If a cycle loses a wheel or tire, it goes directly to Crash Table 1. If a 6-wheeler loses only one rear tire or wheel on a side, the hazard is only D1, and handling drops by only 1. Normal penalties apply if the other rear wheel or tire on that side is lost. See Sec. 12.

VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

Vehicle . . . . . Driver . . . . . .

Left armor .....
Back armor .....
Top armor .....
Underbody armor .....
Front armor .....
Right armor .....

Size . . . . . Weight. . . . . Chassis . . . . . Suspension . . . . . .
Acceleration . . . . . Handling Class . . . . . Cost . . . . . .
Extras . . . . . .
Notes . . . . . .

SPEED TRACK

-20	-15	-10	-5	0
5	10	15	20	25
30	35	40	45	50
55	60	65	70	75
80	85	90	95	100

HANDLING TRACK

5	4	3	2	1	0
-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6

CONTROL TABLE

Speed	Handling Track Status: 0 or better	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	modifier
5- 10	safe	safe	safe	safe	safe	safe	safe	–
15- 20	safe	safe	safe	safe	safe	2	2	-2
25- 30	safe	safe	safe	2	3	4	4	0
35- 40	safe	safe	2	2	3	4	5	0
45- 50	safe	safe	2	2	3	4	6	1
55- 60	safe	safe	2	3	4	5	6	1
65- 70	safe	2	2	3	4	5	XX	2
75- 80	safe	2	3	4	5	6	XX	2
85- 90	safe	2	3	4	5	XX	XX	3
95-100	safe	3	4	5	6	XX	XX	3

Cross-index the handling status of your vehicle (from the Handling Track) with its speed, and roll one die. If you roll the *number shown* or *higher*, you keep control of the car. If you roll lower, you lose control.

If you lose control, go to the appropriate Crash Table (No. 1 for maneuvers, No. 2 for hazards). 'Safe' means you cannot crash. 'XX' means you lose control automatically – go to the Crash Table. When you go to the Crash Table for any reason, add or subtract the number in the 'modifier' column for your speed – i.e., at 20 mph, you would subtract 2 from your roll on either Crash Table.

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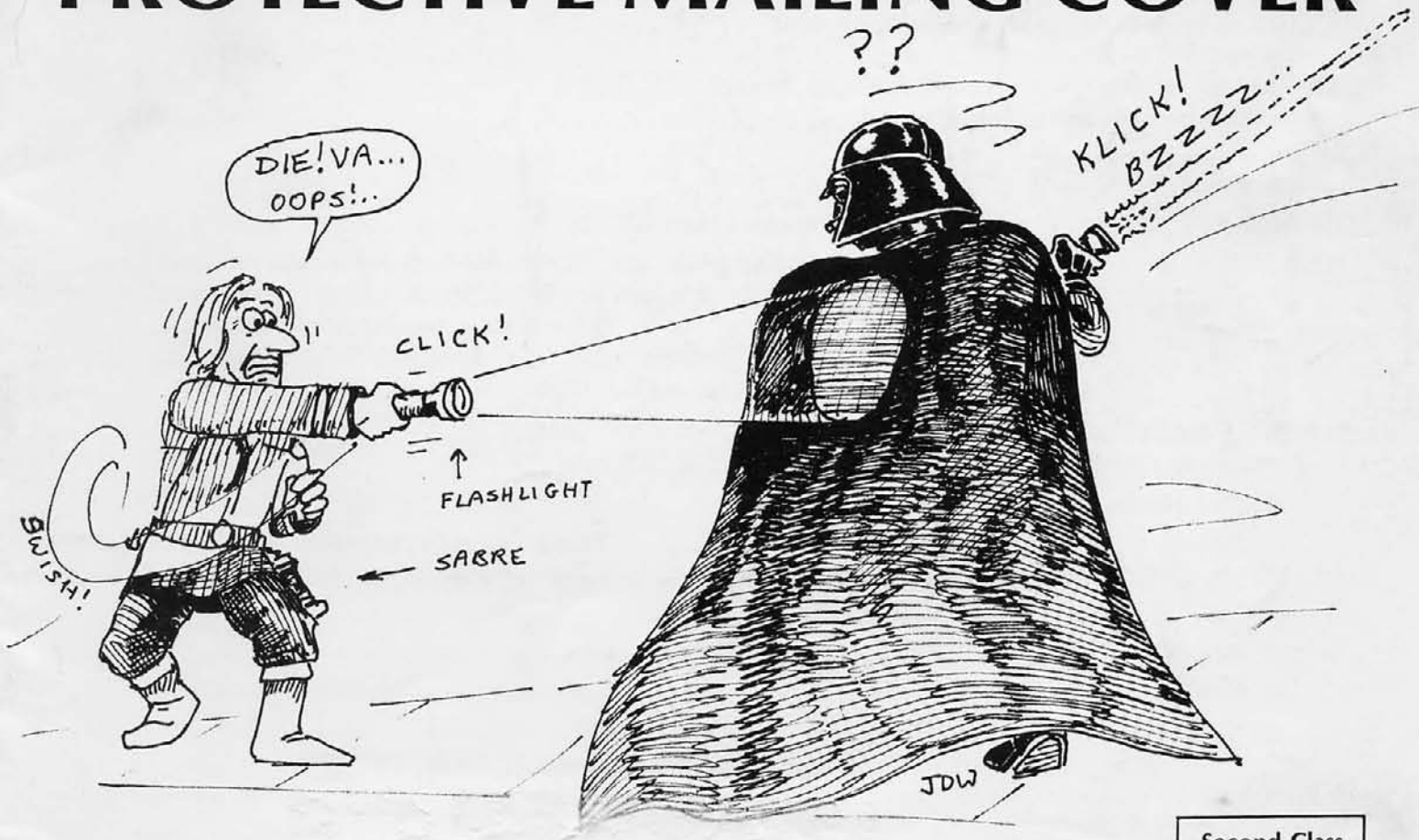

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